Bursting the bubble from the inside: Individual and environmental barriers to upward mobility among Mexican immigrants

Rachel Sheli Shinnar

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BURSTING THE BUBBLE FROM THE INSIDE: INDIVIDUAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS TO UPWARD MOBILITY AMONG MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Hotel Administration
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Graduate College
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August 2004
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Rachel S. Shinnar

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Bursting the Bubble From the Inside: Individual And Environmental Barriers
And Motivators to Upward Mobility Among Mexican Immigrants

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Hotel Administration

Examination Committee Chair

Dean of the Graduate College

Examination Committee Member

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ABSTRACT

Bursting the Bubble from the Inside: Individual and Environmental Barriers and Motivators to Upward Mobility Among Mexican Immigrants

by

Rachel Sheli Shinnar

Dr. Cheri A. Young, Examination Committee Chair
Assistant Professor of Hotel Administration
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The career progression of Hispanic employees has received limited attention in organizational and counseling psychology research and no studies examined the special circumstances relevant to Hispanic immigrants. Additional career-related research with Hispanic immigrants is therefore necessary, and has been called for by specialists in the field (Arbona, 1995; Brown, 2002; Lent & Worthington, 1999; Leong & Brown, 1995; Super, 1991). Studying career progression of this group would enhance our knowledge regarding the ways in which cultural values and the overall “immigrant” experiences influence their desire for and actual pursuit of upward mobility. My study examined the barriers and motivators to career progression among Hispanic immigrant workers in the Las Vegas hospitality industry. As this was an exploratory study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with seventeen Mexican immigrant hotel employees. Findings identify two main groups of variables influencing career progression among Hispanic immigrants: Individual and environmental variables. Individual variables include human capital, self-concept, ethnic identity, cultural values and stress. Environmental variables include the local job market, the organizational culture and climate, and the characteristics of the job itself. This study proposes a model explaining career progression among Hispanic immigrants and offers some recommendations for human resources professional to increase upward mobility within this employee group.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale for the Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Differences in the Workplace</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation Overview</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development Theories</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holland’s Theory</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Super’s Theory</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Self Efficacy Theory</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gottfredson’s Theory</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Career Development Theory</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanics in the United States</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is Hispanic?</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Characteristics of the Hispanic Population</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region of Residence</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Attainment</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. residence and citizenship status</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Immigration</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration and the North American Workplace</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilation versus Acculturation</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Cultural Values</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectivism</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simpatia</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familialism</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Distance</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Orientation and Fatalismo</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers to Upward Mobility</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Capital and Upward Mobility</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life and Work Stressors</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passivity and Learned Helplessness</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Identity</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Identity Theory</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessing Social Status</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status Perpetuation</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Approach</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability and Validity</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Protocol Development</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaining Access</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population of Interest</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection and Management</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewing Skills</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection Method</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR ANTECEDENTS TO THE DESIRE OF UPWARD MOBILITY</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upward Mobility in the Las Vegas Hospitality Industry</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upward Mobility</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Capital</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Concept</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Identity</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Identity and Coping</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture and Upward Mobility</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simpatia</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familialism</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Time Orientation</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatalismo</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1</td>
<td>Population by Hispanic Origin and Region of Residence in 2000</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2</td>
<td>Population by Hispanic Origin and Age Group in 2000</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3</td>
<td>Population by Hispanic Origin and Educational Attainment in 2000</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4</td>
<td>Research Questions and Interview Protocol</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5</td>
<td>Interviewee Demographic Information</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Rationale for the Study

The career progression of Hispanic employees has received limited attention in organizational studies (Arbona, 1995). Many researchers have examined the career paths of women (Cotter, Hermsen, Seth, & Vanneman, 2001; Van Vianen & Fisher, 2002), others investigated career progression among ethnic and racial minorities (Carlo, 2000; Constantine Erickson, Banks, & Timberlake, 1998), and a few even looked specifically at minority women (Gomez et al., 2001; Richie et al., 1997). However, little attention was given to career progression among Hispanics (Arbona, 1995; 1996) and research specific to Hispanic immigrants is virtually non-existent. Several theories in the counseling psychology field attempt to explain career-related processes. While Hispanic immigrants may face some of the same difficulties as native born minorities and/or women, their situation remains unique in many ways. Additional career-related research with Hispanics is therefore necessary, and has been called for by specialists in the field (Arbona, 1995; Brown, 2000, 2002; Lent & Worthington, 1999; Leong & Brown, 1995; Super, 1991).

In order to fill the gap in available knowledge, this study examined the barriers
and motivators to career progression among Hispanic immigrant workers in the United States. This is necessary and could further develop career theories which have been identified as culturally bound (Arbona, 1995; Brown, 2000, 2002; Lent & Worthington, 1999; Leong & Brown, 1995; Super, 1991). The traditionally ethnocentric character of organizational research could be blamed for this limitation. Ethnocentrism occurs when individuals “tend to assume that the behaviors of others, no matter what their origins, can be interpreted according to the rules and values of one’s [own] culture” (Thiederman, 1991, p. 23). While some studies have examined North American organizations operating overseas and the challenges faced by North American managers dealing with a local workforce in these organizations (Griffeth & Hom, 1987; Hofstede, 1980; Milliman, Taylor, & Czaplewski, 2003), few researchers studied intercultural interactions among individuals working in organizations within the United States. The need for such research has been called for on several occasions. Frost (1980) called for an expansion of organizational studies to broader and different populations of organizational participants. Close to two decades later, in his book Work Motivation in Organizational Behavior, Pinder (1998) recommended that more attention be given to immigrant laborers in organizational research, stating that “they have received virtually no attention during the past decades of research on work motivation” (p. 473).

While Hispanic culture is in many ways compatible with organizational cultures in the U.S., there are some cultural differences that should not be overlooked. Several studies have shown that culturally, Hispanics are different from non-Hispanic Whites (Hofstede, 1980; Kluckhorn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Mendoza & Martínez, 1981; Reimers, 1992; Thiederman, 1991; Valencia, 1989). Organizations sensitive to these differences...
may have an advantage in making Hispanic employees more comfortable at work. They may also benefit from an advantage in attracting these workers, who are generally viewed as excellent employees (De Forest, 1981, 1984). Thiederman (1991) discusses some of the benefits of cultural sensitivity, including the ability to: (1) communicate better, in spite of language barriers, (2) motivate workers through accurate interpretations of behaviors and culturally-aware motivational strategies, (3) accurately evaluate culturally diverse applicants and employees, and (4) create a more harmonious and comfortable workplace. However, career theories have been identified as limited in their ability to explain career progression among ethnic minorities (Arbona, 1995; Leong & Brown, 1995; Leong & Serafica, 2001). Therefore, in order to better understand, and possibly promote career progression among Hispanic immigrant employees, the available career theories should be reexamined.

Career theories have been developed in order to explain the forces that guide and shape an individual’s career path or progression. A career “is a sequence of work-related positions occupied by a person during a life-time” (Hellriegel, Slocum, & Woodman, 2001, p. 7). Super (1976) defined the term career as “the course of events that constitute a life; the sequence of occupational and other life roles which combine to express one’s commitment to work in his or her pattern of self-development” (as cited in Hernandez, 1995, p. 157). The term career has traditionally been associated with some type of movement up the organizational ladder. Indeed, most career theories imply a certain upward progression or cycle, which includes “a preparation stage, a stage of demonstrating competence and initial adjustment to work, a maintenance-advancement stage, and a stage characterized by decline in involvement with the work place”
(Vondracek & Kawasaki, 1995, p. 114). Today's careers, however, can also describe one's movement among various jobs in different fields without ever being promoted (Hellriegel, Slocum, & Woodman, 2001). In this paper, the terms career progression, career path, career development, and upward mobility will be used interchangeably to describe the movement between jobs.

The need to dedicate more attention to upward mobility among Hispanics was also voiced by practitioners. Suro (1992) warned that “upward mobility\(^1\) among the 14 million people of Mexican descent in the United States—the nation’s fastest growing major ethnic group—is faltering” (p. 1). Close to a decade later, Latinos remain the most underrepresented in supervisory positions compared to other groups (Elliott & Smith, 2001). This is also reflected in the socio-economic status of this group: only 2% of Hispanics living in the U.S. earn more than $75,000 a year, compared to 11% among non-Hispanic Whites (Olson, 2003, p. 22). A third and final reason for researchers to focus on Hispanic immigrants is based on the tremendous growth of this group in the U.S. population. There are over 35 million Hispanic individuals representing over 12% of the population—a figure which is projected to reach 16% by 2020—(Guzmán, 2001), about half of whom (14.5 million) are foreign-born (Schmidley, 2001). The growth of the Hispanic population, and other minority groups, increases the diversity in North American society and subsequently in the workforce as well. As a result, traditional assumptions and expectations regarding human behavior at work need to be adjusted. Diversification changes workplace dynamics, as employees must manage, work with, or be managed by, other employees with whose cultural backgrounds they may be

---

\(^1\) As stated, the term “upward mobility” as it is used here, refers to one’s advancement in the workplace into higher level positions. This includes higher-level line positions as well as supervisory positions.
unfamiliar. Managers and leaders wishing to remain successful must learn how to recognize and cope with cultural differences at work. “Any North American organization which expects to be successful in doing business and managing today’s increasingly diverse and heterogeneous society, will have to dispel the notion that there is only one best way of managing and organizing” (Irizarry-Flores, 1997, p. 5).

Cultural Differences in the Workplace

Cultural differences may influence work attitudes and work experiences because our values dictate our behaviors and our interpretation of events (Guzman, 2001; Irizarry-Flores, 1997; Thiederman, 1991). Cultural differences may influence one’s relationships with peers as well as supervisors and/or managers on the job. They may also influence one’s attitude toward work and work related decision-making. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge cultural differences and to try and understand them. For example, the scarcity of Hispanics in supervisory positions in the hospitality and other industries, has raised some concern among practitioners (Benston, 2003; Elliott & Smith, 2001; Suro, 1992; Thomas, 1995). Is this situation due to human capital issues only or due to a combination of different forms of capital (including human, cultural, and social capital), cultural values, and other factors?

Human capital is measured though variables such as age, education, English proficiency, work experience and tenure in the U.S. (Bohon, 2001) and may play a role in the limited upward mobility of Hispanics. Census data show that Hispanics in general, and Mexicans especially, have lower educational attainment than the non-Hispanic White population and other minorities (Guzmán, 2001). This, combined with low levels of
English proficiency, may represent a major challenge for upward mobility. Some environmental factors come into play as well—many Latinos live in ethnic enclaves, virtually isolated from American society, which slows their English language acquisition and acculturation processes. Because many immigrate to the U.S. as adults, learning a new language can prove to be especially challenging. Other forms of capital such as social and cultural capital may also influence upward mobility. “Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 119). Cultural capital refers to the degree of cultural knowledge one possesses about the host society and includes, for example, familiarity with the Anglo value system, North American communication styles, behavioral standards, and/or job-hunting techniques (Krumboltz & Coon, 1995). Some Hispanic immigrants may have limited social and cultural capital because, living in ethnic enclaves, they have limited contact with non-Hispanic White Americans. They are also frequently separated by language, job sector, church affiliation, etc.

One’s motivation to immigrate can also play a role in attitudes toward acculturation and life goals. For example, Mexican immigration is predominantly driven by economic desperation (Bohon, 2001) and many Mexicans come to the U.S. primarily in order to work and improve their financial standing with the intention to return home at some point. “Mexicans, therefore, may be more likely to view their migration as temporary and hence...be less motivated...to achieve high levels of occupational attainment” (Bohon, 2001, p. 119). Such short-term immigrants are referred to as
sojourners. They “focus on maximizing short-term earnings and are therefore unlikely to make long-term cultural and social investments in the host society” (Nee & Sanders, 2001, p. 388). One’s reason for immigration then, may directly influence career aspirations because those who immigrate out of desire for economic betterment may have an “immigration mentality... wherein the goal [is] to survive...[While those who] immigrated in pursuit of opportunities other than economic were motivated by dreams rather than by survival” (Gomez et al., 2001, p. 293).

While the above mentioned human, social, and cultural capital as well as reasons for immigration most likely play some part in the limited upward mobility of Hispanic immigrants, the question remains whether other factors inherent to the Hispanic culture are also influential. Possibly, Latino/a workers do not seek out promotions as much as Anglo workers do because of cultural differences (Hispanic cultural aspects are discussed in detail in Chapter Two). For example, the cultural value of high uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1980) is likely to contribute to a reduced desire for job mobility in general, and promotion into supervisory positions in particular, among Hispanic workers. In addition, the Hispanic present-time-oriented culture (Hofstede, 1980) limits one’s tendency to plan for the future. Indeed, success in the development process of one’s career has been shown to require future orientation (Carter, 1991). The focus on present obligations and duties may lead Hispanics to remain passive in terms of seeking out promotions or investing time and effort into making themselves more promotable (through language and other skill acquisition). Passivity may be further accentuated because of the cultural value of fatalismo, which posits an external locus of control and a general passive approach to life. Finally, the high power distance identified in Latin
American culture (Hofstede, 1980), may lead some individuals to simply accept social stratification as a given, and limit their aspirations to nothing beyond blue-collar type work. The concept of such leveled aspirations (MacLeod, 1995) will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

Immigrant workers are not alone in having to deal with the effects of ‘culture shock’—their managers are also affected by it. American managers have largely been taught to manage according to one set of rules and principles—a set that applies to White mainstream American workers who more or less share the same culture and ideas regarding the work environment (Thiederman, 1991). Therefore, one of the barriers to upward mobility for Hispanic workers can lie in the interpretations managers give to their behaviors. The behaviors of Hispanic immigrants on the job, which are guided to a certain degree by their cultural values, may influence their upward mobility because they determine how peers and supervisors or managers perceive them. For example, a Hispanic employee’s desire to take days off may lie in his or her desire to participate in family events and does not necessarily signal an indifference about work. Because culture consists of a set of taken-for-granted assumptions, managers may behave in an ethnocentric manner, sometimes unconsciously. Managerial assumptions can also be formed by organizational culture which is often a factor of national culture (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2004). Such ethnocentrism may cause managers to interpret work absences as indifference or lack of motivation, rather than culturally-bound behavior.

Discrimination may also play a role in blocked upward mobility for Hispanics because many Americans hold negative stereotypes about Hispanics (Buriel & Vasquez, 1982). Indeed, Baldi and Branch-McBrier (1997) have exposed different determinants of
promotion between Blacks and Whites. Showing that the status associated with being White or African American influenced managerial decisions regarding promotions. Namely, while Whites were evaluated based on potential, African Americans were evaluated based on experience. In this case, race was used as a proxy to estimate future success. Such differential treatments may also occur when Hispanics are considered for promotion. Having experienced discrimination, can shape the attitudes of the Hispanic individual, damaging his or her self-concept as well as causing him or her to become more passive—feeling that: “No matter how hard I try, I won’t be able to change my situation”. This is also referred to as learned helplessness (Overmier, 2002). Possibly, having been denied upward mobility and/or access to better jobs, Hispanics in the U.S. do not seek these opportunities any longer.

Discrimination is driven by stereotypes which are “formed on the basis of observed social roles and structures” (Brief, 1998, p. 123). For example, “Whites may observe menial jobs to be performed largely by Hispanics and virtually never by members of their own group; on the basis of these observations ...attributions are made about the characteristics of Hispanics as a group” (Brief, 1998, p. 123). Stereotypes can be formed through media portrayals of certain groups. In the U.S., the media has influenced public perceptions of Latinos through film, for example, contributing to a gang- and crime-oriented perception of Latinos (Cortés, 1993; Hernandez, 1995). Stereotypes are problematic because they limit our definition of a person and tend to act as self-fulfilling prophecies, preventing us from seeing qualities that a person might possess because of preconceived ideas (Thiederman, 1991). Brief (1998) refers to stereotypes as “attitudinal baggage” (p. 119) and believes that they tend to distort our
perceptions of individuals. "Ethnocentric managers have...a tendency to feel that [their own group] is more intelligent, more capable, or more reliable....Ethnocentrism is often not attributable to prejudice as much as to inexperience or lack of knowledge about foreign persons and situations" (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2004, p. 120). Brief (1998) states that we are more likely to form stereotypes about people we know little about—we are more inclined to group them together. Often, these individuals “are perceived [to be] more similar to their stereotypes than they really are” (Brief, 1998, p. 125).

Finally, being a member of a minority group may also influence the way one sees one self as well as other members of society. In fact, ethnic identity has been shown to be more salient among minorities than among their majority counterparts and play an important role in the formation of personality (Arbona, 1995) and of the self-concept (Miville, Koonce, Darlington, & Whitlock, 2000; Tajfel, 1981). This is related to career progression because ethnic identity, due to societal discrimination and oppression, often becomes a salient domain of the individual’s overall ego and personality (Phinney, 1990) which may influence the roles minority individuals may pursue.

The following research questions guided this study:

- What are Mexican immigrant employees’ feelings about work and how do these feelings influence desires for upward mobility in the workplace?
- What are some of the barriers and/or motivators to upward mobility for Mexican immigrant employees? What forms of capital influence desire and pursuit of upward mobility?
- What job characteristics are considered desirable by Mexican immigrants and how does this influence desires for job change?
How do interpersonal relationships at work with co-ethnic and non-co-ethnic peers and with co-ethnic and non-co-ethnic supervisors and/or managers influence the desire for upward mobility?

To what extent do cultural values influence desire for upward mobility among Mexican immigrants?

What role do social and ethnic identities play in influencing Mexican immigrants' desire for upward mobility?

To what extent does stress limit the desire for and pursuit of upward mobility among Mexican immigrants?

Methods

In order to examine some of the barriers and motivations to upward mobility and career progression unique to the Hispanic population, an exploratory study was designed. A qualitative approach was selected because, as Chapter Two will demonstrate, little has been achieved so far in examining the applicability of career theories to Hispanic immigrants. An exploratory approach has been cited as the most suitable when investigating understudied populations (Gomez et al., 2001). In addition, this approach was deemed most appropriate for answering the research questions at hand. Maxwell (1996) explains that a qualitative approach is most suitable when one wishes to understand what meaning study participants derive from certain experiences in a specific context. In addition, when a researcher wishes to explain a process and develop causal explanations, a qualitative approach can be more revealing. In addition, practical considerations were also important, as many Hispanics have limited English proficiency
levels and low educational attainment, survey based research could be difficult to execute. In addition, this population is usually unaccustomed to survey research, which is an additional reason to conduct interviews.

“In the field of career development, increasing attention is being given to methodological approaches that depart from the positivistic scientific tradition….including narrative and biography as methods for understanding the career development of individuals” (Vondracek & Kawasaki, 1995, p. 115). I have selected a similar approach, which is more flexible and receptive to the input of research participants. Following the positivist approach, the researcher has certain predetermined variables in mind, which he or she deems important and thus examines the interaction between those variables only. The positivist approach usually employs quantitative research methods such as a survey or structured interview format. In order to discover as many of the variables that influence upward mobility among Hispanic immigrant workers as possible, a less rigid approach was deemed most suitable, in an effort “to develop an empathetic understanding of the world of others” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 34-35). This has allowed me to more clearly identify how research participants felt about events and how this may influence their desire for upward mobility. In addition, employing a positivist approach by measuring variables that have been shown to play an important part in upward mobility among Anglo Saxon, White employees may prove inappropriate when studying Hispanic immigrants who have different value sets and face different realities when living in the United States.

In this study, only Mexican immigrants working in the Las Vegas hospitality industry were be interviewed. This specific focus was based on: (a) the significant inter-
group differences within the Hispanic population; and (b) the fact that, in Nevada, over 72% of the Hispanics are of Mexican heritage (Guzmán, 2001). While the focus of this study is on Mexican immigrant employees only, the terms Hispanic, Latino/a, and Mexican will be used throughout this paper, because the bulk of the research and available Census data are on the Hispanic population as a whole, and are not always available for the Mexican sub-group separately. The decision to study foreign born individuals only lies in the differences between immigrants and native born Hispanics (Buriel & Vasquez, 1982; Dworkin, 1965). Finally, the choice to study employees of the hospitality industry lies in the fact that this industry is the largest employer in Nevada and that this group was available for study.

Foreign-born Mexican workers were interviewed about their work experiences in the U.S., and more specifically in the Las Vegas hospitality industry. A semi-structured interview protocol was used so as to allow issues that were important in the eyes of the subjects—not the researcher—to emerge. Access to study participants was obtained from a local church assisting Mexican immigrants who were members of the local union, in pursuing citizenship.

Dissertation Overview

This dissertation will be presented in the six chapters that follow. Chapter Two summarizes the relevant literature, including a discussion of the major theories in career progression. Cultural values typical of the Hispanic culture are presented and contrasted with Anglo cultural values. The role of cultural values in the world of work is also examined. Research and theory on the antecedents and outcomes of acculturation are
presented as they apply to the Hispanic population. Social identity theory is also described, showing how it relates to the immigrant experience in terms of ethnic identity. Finally, a discussion of status—its measurement and impact—is offered. Chapter Three presents the methods of data collection and treatment. It also provides a detailed discussion of research soundness in terms of validity and reliability, and delineates the steps followed in this study in order to enhance and preserve reliability and validity.

Chapters Four and Five present the research findings, including a discussion of the individual research questions and how these relate to upward mobility. Chapter Four is dedicated to the individual variables acting as antecedents to the desire for upward mobility. Chapter Five describes the moderating process between the desire to pursue upward mobility and the actual action to do so. Moderating variables include cultural values, individuals variables, and environmental factors. In Chapter Six the model developed based on the findings of this study is presented. This chapter also provides a summary of the findings and a discussion of how career theories can be adapted to apply to Hispanic immigrant workers. Finally, Chapter Seven presented the study's limitations, conclusions, recommendations for human resources management strategies, and suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Close to a decade ago, Leong (1995) edited an entire volume dedicated to research and theory on the career development and vocational behavior of racial and ethnic minorities. Since then, additional work has been done in this area (e.g., Carlo, 2000; Constantine, Erickson, Banks, & Timberlake, 1998; Gomez et al., 2001; Richie et al., 1997). While some studies examined Hispanic individuals (e.g., Flores & O'Brien, 2002; Gomez et al., 2001; Hill, Ramirez, & Dumka, 2003; Rivera, Anderson, & Middleton, 1999), no one focused on the special situation of immigrant employees. This group has remained largely understudied, in spite of its growing importance in the American labor force. Brown (2002), a prolific researcher in the area of career progression, recently critiqued career theories, stating they have remained limited in their capacity to explain the career development of ethnic minorities. He stated that:

because the occupational choice-making process of cultural minorities has gone largely un-addressed, it seems necessary to advance a theory that attempts to explain both the occupational choice-making and adaptation process of all groups. Cultural and work values were advanced as the primary factors in occupational
choice and the outcomes of those choices. Gender, SES, history of
discrimination, scholastic aptitude, special attitudes, self-efficacy and other
variables were also included as salient variables.... What is needed at this point is
research that focuses on the role of values generally, and cultural values
specifically, on the career decision-making processes, the choices made, and the
outcomes of those choices (Brown, 2002, p. 54, emphasis added).

Indeed, North American society includes a myriad of ethnic and cultural
orientations, which have become increasingly apparent in workplaces as well (Judy &
D’Amico, 1997). Hispanics are the fastest growing ethnic group in North American
society and workplaces, but the available theories on career progression remain limited in
their ability to explain the occupational development of this group (Arbona, 1995). Since
“employees bring their societal culture to work...in the form of customs and language”
(Kreitner & Kinicki, 2004, p. 118), we need to identify and understand their cultural
heritage and its implication for values, behaviors and attitudes at work. “The central
problem with most, if not all, of the majority career theories is their lack of cultural
validity for racial and ethnic minorities in this country” (Leong & Brown, 1995, p. 145).
Therefore, academics as well as practitioners need to explore the ways in which Hispanic
cultural values influence foreign-born Latinos/as in North American workplaces.

In the following, an overview of the relevant literature is presented. First, I
present some of the central theories in the area of vocational psychology, which focus on
individual career progression. I will also discuss why these theories are culturally bound
and how this study may enhance their applicability to Hispanic immigrants. Second, I
provide a definition of the term Hispanic, and offer some general characteristics of
Hispanics living in the United States. Third, I describe some of the drivers for immigration among people of Hispanic origin—as well as their integration process into the American society—and explain how these processes may be related to career progression questions. Fourth, I discuss different Hispanic cultural values and show how these differ from Anglo, North-American values and how they may impact work values and desire for achieving upward mobility. Finally, factors related to the experiences of the Hispanic immigrant population, such as ethnic identity, are discussed and their possible influence on individual career aspirations presented. I conclude by identifying the population of interest and presenting the research questions to be examined.

Career Development Theories

Specialists in the field of career development research admit that understanding “the course of development of individuals in today’s world represents a challenge of utmost complexity for science” (Vondracek & Kawasaki, 1995, p. 111). In order to remain applicable to diverse groups, career development theories must take into account the increased complexity of the world of work today. The current career-choice theories suffer from “cultural blind spots” (Leong & Serafica, 2001, p. 191) which lie in four major and interrelated criticisms: (1) Many theories of career development are based on research conducted with primarily White, middle-class males. (2) Several career theories are based on assumptions that are of limited scope when considered from a cross-cultural perspective. These assumptions presuppose that career development is continuous, uninterrupted, and progressive; decision makers possess the psychological, social, and economic means of affecting their
choices; there is dignity in all work; there exists a free and open labor market; and most career choices flow essentially from internal factors (Leong & Brown, 1995, p. 147).

(3) Terms such as race, ethnicity, and minority are sometimes confused or inappropriately defined. (4) The theories tend to ignore, or address only to a limited degree, contextual factors such as the sociopolitical, socioeconomic, social-psychological, and sociocultural realities of culturally diverse individuals (Leong & Brown, 1995).

In the following, several theories from the field of vocational psychology are presented. The first four theories were selected because of their possible applicability to the career development of Hispanic subgroups and also because they are considered as the major theories in the field (Arbona, 1995). In addition, because the vocational psychology field is dedicated to career counseling, most of the research has been done with high school and college students. For this reason, I also present a fifth theory, which focuses on the careers of working adults. The theories to be discussed include Holland's theory (1985), Super's developmental theory (1991), career self-efficacy theory (Betz & Hackett, 1986), Gottfredson's circumscription and compromise theory (1981), and the theory for adult career development (Vondracek & Kawasaki, 1995). Each theory will be presented alongside some of the research that tested it, if such research was identified. The limitations of each theory, in terms of its applicability to the Hispanic immigrant situation, will also be discussed.

Holland's Theory

Holland (1985) saw vocational interest as an expression of personality, focusing on the choice process involved in one's career growth. He identified six personality
types (realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional) according to which individuals select the best fitting occupational environments. According to the theory, individuals’ career choice can be predicted because people strive for an occupational environment that matches their most salient personality type. For example, “an investigative/social combination type might be represented in a science teacher” (Gothard, 2001, p. 15). Congruence between personal interests and occupation enhances satisfaction and stability. The theory suggests that individuals will continue changing jobs until they find one that offers a personality-environment fit. Holland (1985) also argued that when factors such as age, class, race, and gender restrict the range of career options available and the pursuit of one’s most salient personality feature, individuals will pursue an environment in which they can express the second most important personality feature.

Research testing this theory with Hispanic populations has been limited to studies of the assessment instruments themselves, regarding career interests among Hispanic college and high school students (Arbona, 1990, 1995). While these studies suggested a general fit between the world-view of Hispanic youth and the world-view of the majority culture, additional research with Hispanic adults and Hispanic immigrants is necessary. Although ethnic minority youth express career expectations similar to White youth, they have limited occupational attainment when compared to Whites (Fouad & Bingham, 1995).

The major limitation of Holland's theory (1985) stems from the fact that the six personality types he identified were developed according to North American cultural values. In addition, his theory is also limited because it fails to acknowledge that the
choice of various occupational environments may not be equally available to ethnic minorities. Ethnic minorities may be channeled into low-level jobs, and be unable to choose work based on personal interests. In addition, Holland (1985) "failed to articulate what the implications of experiencing restricted career options for an extended period of time may be for personality development [which]... is the historic experience of many ethnic groups" (Leong & Brown, 1995, p. 150). Finally, when an individual experiences limited opportunities for self-expression at work but is unable to change jobs, he or she could select alternative outlets for self-expression outside the work environment such as becoming actively involved in the community or assuming leadership roles in a church, local union, or similar organization. This could be especially appealing to Hispanic individuals who are culturally more oriented toward collectivism (to be discussed later on) and likely to derive satisfaction from involvement within the community. The question that arises from Holland's (1985) theory is: Does self-expression at work matter to Hispanic immigrants?

Super's Theory

Super's career development model (1991) is less focused on the predictability of career choices but rather seeks to explain the process of career decision making. He proposed that career development is a continuous process influenced by a number of psychological and social factors. The stages of career development according to Super (1991) include growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline. During the exploration stage, for example, the individual acquires occupational information, chooses a career from a number of possible alternatives and starts working. In the establishment
stage, a person becomes established in his or her job, pursuing personally set career and work goals.

Super (1991) used personal roles to illustrate the ways in which the individual conducts his or her life. He proposed the life-career rainbow (Gothard, 2001) which includes nine roles an individual may occupy during different life stages (child, student, citizen, worker, spouse, homemaker, parent, and pensioner) in four different spheres (home, community, education, and work). Possibly, the importance placed on each of these roles differs across cultures, an issue that is not addressed in the theory. Specific roles may be more or less salient based on cultural values—such as the role of the parent, for example, which extends for longer periods of time than in North American culture.

Super (1991) also identified the importance of self-concept in the development of one’s vocational identity. Self-concept refers to the way in which the individual sees him of herself and is shaped by personal appearance, abilities, personality, gender, values, social status (Gottfredson, 2002). Social identity has also been identified as part of individual self-concept, which for ethnic group members includes ethnic-identity as well (Tajfel, 1981). Indeed, ethnic identity, because of societal discrimination and oppression, often becomes a salient domain of the individual’s overall ego and personality (Phinney, 1990) which may influence the roles minority individuals may pursue. Self-concept influences career choice because an individual’s self-concept will determine which occupations this individual perceives as desirable and which occupations he or she rejects as undesirable. Pound (1978), for example, found self-concept to influence career maturity in that external sources served as frames of reference in self-evaluation, which subsequently determined career maturity.
For example, a study with Mexican-American students found that less successful Mexican-American students identified their academically successful peers as seeking to become White and thus moving away from the Hispanic ethnic identity (Matute-Bianchi, 1986). Critical attitudes within one’s immediate circle were also identified as potent in life decisions among Mexican-American teens. For example, Mexican-American high school students felt that if they went to college, they would experience negative family attitudes (McWhirter, 1997). Could ethnic identity play a role in the pursuit of upward mobility because of the fear of in-group criticism? Do Mexican immigrants perceive upward mobility as a betrayal of their ethnic identity because the importance of career progression is a predominantly North American, White value?

While Super’s theory (1991) was tested with predominantly White college students (Arbona, 1995), some studies also applied it to Hispanic college students. These studies found similarities between Hispanic students and their White-American peers in terms of career-decision making attitudes (Luzzo, 1992), career-decision making skill, and congruence between interests and aspirations (Super et al., 1981). It was also deemed “helpful in understanding and guiding the career choice process of low income Mexican–American high school students for whom the students and worker roles are salient” (Bullington & Arbona, 2001, p. 152). The fact that Super (1991) incorporated self-concept into his theory allows for variables specific to Hispanics immigrants to be accounted for in explaining career progression. These include ethnic identity and cultural values, for example.

However, Super’s theory (1991) has not been tested with adult Hispanics or Hispanic immigrants—to determine whether the stages of career development are
occurring for adult minority workers as well. The problem with Super’s life-career rainbow is that it assumes a smooth career life progression which is no longer the case for many workers, especially immigrants. Indeed, it has been documented, for example, that the employment reality of African American men is not necessarily linear and includes early entry into the labor force, holding a series of unrelated jobs including sporadic periods of unemployment (Leong & Brown, 1995). The employment history of Hispanic immigrants may be similarly non-linear—especially given the interruption of one’s work career caused by immigration—and may thus not fit Super’s career progression scheme.

Super’s theory suffers from an additional limitation since most aspects of Super’s theory “are likely to be relevant to middle- and upper-class Hispanics and, regardless of social class, for adolescents for whom the student and worker role is salient as well as for highly educated adults” (Arbona, 1995, p. 48). These individuals can, and often do, select their career paths proactively. However, individuals of low educational and socioeconomic status—as many Mexican immigrants tend to be—frequently have limited options in career choice and tend to enter the labor market in a reactive (rather than proactive) process (Leong & Brown, 1995). In addition, these individuals are often unable to progress in their careers because of personal factors such as limited educational attainment as well as environmental factors, such as discrimination.

Finally, Super’s theory suffers a cultural gap because it ignores the ways in which factors such as discrimination and poverty influence the formation of self-concept and how discrimination and low educational attainment may restrict the types of opportunities available to minorities and immigrants. It is important to account for contextual variables...
because these influence the ways in which an individual operates. Vondracek and Kawasaki (1995) stated that "the properties of the individual's environment differentially facilitate and constrain possible developmental pathways" (p. 120). The impact of the immediate context was also identified as significant in the career progression of Hispanic women, going as far as examining the sociopolitical movements that may influence their lives (Gomez et al., 2001). For example, Gainor and Forrest (1991) suggested that African American women limited their career choices because they expected to encounter sexism and racism at the workplace. The questions that arise out of Super's theory are: What are the variables in the North American workplace that shape the formation of the self-concept among Hispanic immigrants? Could Hispanic immigrants' self-concept prevent them from aspiring to improve their occupational status?

**Career Self Efficacy Theory**

Career self-efficacy theory (Betz & Hackett, 1986), compared to the two theories discussed above, is more promising in its applicability to minority individuals. It is based on Bandura's (1977) work on self-efficacy, which refers to a person's belief concerning his or her ability to perform a specific behavior and/or task. Self-efficacy expectations are learned through four sources of information: (1) accomplishments—namely successfully performing the behavior in question; (2) vicarious learning or modeling; (3) verbal persuasion—encouragement and support from others; and (4) lower levels of anxiety in connection with the behavior. Bandura (1977) further proposed that "low self-efficacy expectations regarding a behavior...lead to avoidance of those behaviors, poorer performance, and a tendency to give up at the first sign of difficulty" (Betz, 2001, p. 58). Similarly, Betz and Hackett's theory (1986) states that career self-efficacy expectations
are beliefs about one's ability to successfully perform occupationally relevant behaviors and that these expectations guide one's actions to pursue career development (Betz & Hackett, 1986). These expectations also determine the amount of effort invested in the pursuit of goals and the persistence in the face of obstacles and barriers.

Lent and Hackett (1987) asserted that the self-efficacy construct could be useful in explaining the career behavior of ethnic minorities, using it to predict the consideration of occupations. For example, both Hispanic and non-Hispanic White males and females tended to express higher self-efficacy for occupations dominated by the same gender, than for occupations dominated by the other gender (Arbona, 1995). Another study with Mexican farm workers, found that individuals considered occupations based on their self-efficacy, interest, and the degree to which an occupation was perceived to meet their most salient needs (Bores-Rangel, Church, Szendre, & Reeves, 1990; Church, Teresa, Rosenbrook, & Szendre, 1992). Finally, a study with adolescents found no significant differences across ethnic groups in terms of the theory's applicability (Panagos & DuBois, 1999). Based on the above-mentioned studies, it appears that career self-efficacy theory may indeed be applicable to Hispanic immigrants. The theory, however, suffers three main limitations.

First, "the power of self-efficacy in predicting behavior is likely [to be] moderated by outcome expectations" (Rivera, Anderson, & Middleton, 1999, p. 100). For example, a competent cook who perceives that a promotion would lead to additional stress may turn down the position even though his sense of self-efficacy regarding the execution of job specific tasks is high. Cultural values may come into play as moderators as well. For example, an individual who is highly efficacious in terms of becoming a supervisor may
turn down this position because it would require him or her to spend more hours at work and fewer hours at home with family members. This would go counter to the Latin American cultural value of familialism.

Second, perceived discrimination may reduce expectations of obtaining a job through conventional means (Ogbu, 1992). Past studies have shown that Mexican high school students were more likely to anticipate ethnic discrimination in future jobs and less confident that they could overcome barriers in the way of their career goals than Euro-American student were (McWhirter, 1997). Perceptions of discrimination among Hispanic law school students showed that:

(a) the higher the perceived discrimination, the less fair the students perceived the promotion process in their future law firm [would] be; and (b) the lower the perceived fairness of the promotion process, the lower the satisfaction with their chosen career (the law profession); and (c) the lower the respondents’ perceived career prospects (Foley & Kidder, 2002, p. 23).

Perceiving limited ties between effort and outcome because of discrimination may discourage individuals to pursue career progress, becoming passive. Could Hispanic immigrants be passive in terms of the pursuit of upward mobility because they perceive limited success in obtaining the job they desire due to discrimination?

Third, some studies have found that self-efficacy is influenced by social class, namely that low-SES individuals will have lower occupational self-efficacy than high-SES individuals (Arbona, 1995). Lauver and Jones (1991) found that one of the predictors of occupational self-efficacy among Hispanic high school students was SES. Furthermore, a recent study comparing low SES to high SES young adults in working
class occupations found significant differences between different SES groups. High SES individuals “expressed greater interest in work as a source of personal satisfaction, higher levels of self-concept crystallization, greater access to external resources, and greater levels of career adaptability” (Blustein et al., 2002, p. 311).

It is important to account for the variables that shape self-efficacy beliefs because low self-efficacy may lead the individual to underestimate his or her abilities and limit his or her occupational goals. This could be especially relevant to the situation of Hispanic immigrants who, because of their minority status and lack of economic resources, are likely...to have had insufficient experiences conducive to the development of career self-efficacy such as performance accomplishment regarding vocational and academic pursuit and exposure to successful role models (Arbona, 1995, p. 57).

In addition, many immigrants hold low SES and suffer discrimination which may act as moderators of the relationship between self-efficacy and career choice.

Gottfredson’s Theory

In her theory of circumscription and compromise, Gottfredson (2002) seeks to explain where interests, abilities, and other determinants of vocational choice originate. The circumscription part of the theory refers to the four stages of development of a person’s self-concept, which occur early in life. Self-concept “refers to one’s view of oneself—of who one is both publicly and privately. It has many elements, including appearance, abilities, personality, gender, values, and place in society” (Gottfredson, 2002, p. 88). During stage one, the self-concept acquires an orientation to size and power. In stage two, it acquires an orientation towards accepted gender roles. In the
third stage, self-concepts acquire an orientation to social evaluation, which includes social class and race. In the fourth and final stage, the self-concept develops an orientation towards one's uniqueness (Leong & Brown, 1995).

As individuals go through the developmental stages of their self-concept, they hierarchically rate occupations by prestige and desirability, rejecting some as unsuitable. Occupational choice is, according to this theory, the result of the perceived fit between one's self-concept and the job itself. The theory postulates that adopted gender roles will be most carefully guarded, followed by one's social standing and finally the last part of the self-concept which includes personality needs. This means that when the job perceived as most suitable is unavailable, individuals compromise, sacrificing the most recently developed aspects of the self-concept, and moving towards the orientations developed the earliest. The compromise portion of the theory then, refers to the way occupational choice is influenced by perceived accessibility to jobs as in situations when preferred occupations are not available. Discrimination, for example, is likely to influence perceptions of accessibility. The theory also mentions that prevailing racial attitudes and discrimination influence one's self-concept and perceived accessibility to jobs. Investigations of this theory in the empirical literature, however, appear to be limited to White suburban middle-class school children (Helwig, 2004).

Gottfredson (2002) extended her theory, including the ways in which contextual (socialization) and individual factors influence individual career aspirations—also known as the nature-nurture conflict. Socialization refers to the social forces that act on the individual (e.g., parents, teachers, and/or society) during the circumscription process. Gottfredson (2002) believes that genetic tendencies, or traits, co-act with the socialization
process in shaping the individual's circumscription process. Gottfredson also discussed some career-choice risk factors that may be experienced by all persons, including minority group members. These risk factors, she believed, needed to be integrated into career theories so as to better describe and explain individuals' career-choice behavior. The first type of risk factor is based on a comparison of the self to the general population. These include, for example, low mental ability, poor education, poverty, cultural isolation, low self-esteem, and functional limitations. The second type is based on a comparison of the self to others within the same social circle such as: nontraditional interests, social isolation, and low or high mental ability relative to family and peers. The third type involved family responsibilities, which are determined by the degree to which an individual is the primary caregiver and/or economic provider of the family.

While Gottfredson's (1981, 1986, 2002) propositions are convincing and appear to encompass many of the variables inherent to the immigrant experience, additional research with ethnic and racial minorities appears to be necessary. Her theory lacks in that the circumscription process may be different for individuals in different countries. Gender roles, for example, are more traditional in Mexico when compared to North America. While her theory has been critiqued for not considering other issues relevant to ethnic groups such as acculturation level (often related to recency of immigration, English proficiency, and educational background), immigration status (documented versus undocumented), and ethnic identity (Gothard, 2001), these issues are accounted for in the third stage of circumscription—when the individual acquires an orientation to social evaluation. Degree of acculturation, ethnic-identity, and immigration status are likely to influence the way the individual assesses him- or herself in relation to the
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majority group, as will be demonstrated in the discussion regarding social identity theory.

The role of cultural values and their influence on career behavior, however, remains
absent from Gottfredson’s propositions.

**Adult Career Development Theory**

The above mentioned theories were based on and tested through studies involving
mostly high school and college students. In an effort to understand the processes
underlying career paths among adults—"the how and why of the behaviors that determine
the work lives of individuals" (Vondracek & Kawasaki, 1995, p. 118)—a new theory was
developed by Vondracek and Kawasaki (1995). These researchers felt that it was
imperative to account for the ways in which the environment facilitates or constraints
possible paths of career progression for adults. They critiqued the tendency of career
models to force complex human behavior into simple, linear cause-and-effect models.

Vondracek and Kawasaki’s (1995) theory incorporates individual motivation, skills,
biological functioning, and the responsiveness of the environment as the four components
of achievement in career progression. Motivation is related to individual desire to pursue
personal goals, and the belief in one’s ability—namely self-efficacy expectations. The
skill level indicates whether the individual possesses the necessary skills to progress in
his or her career. Biological functioning supports the motivational and skill components
of effective functioning. The main addition of this theory to previous ones lies in the
consideration of the environment. Different from previous theories that focused on
person-environment fit, the adult career development theory proposes that “the presence
of a facilitative, responsive, affording environment is important” (p. 123). This is so
because people learn through the experiences they live in their specific social context.
These learning experiences result in self-observations and assessment of skill or ability which determine subsequent career choices and decision making. Intuitively, Vondracek and Kawasaki’s (1995) theory appears to be applicable to the immigrant situation, however, no empirical testing of the applicability of this theory has been identified.

Clearly these theories, while useful, are not always fully applicable to the situation of Hispanic and possibly other immigrants living and working in the United States. Additional research is necessary to test the applicability of these theories to diverse populations. Possibly, the narrow scope of these theories lies in the fact that they were developed to explain career choice among individuals in the early stages of their careers. When one studies Hispanic immigrants’ career progression, the effort lies in identifying the barriers that prevent Hispanic immigrants from being represented in different occupations in rates similar to the rest of the population. Also, while most immigrants are adults, uprooted from their countries, most career theories are aimed at, as mentioned earlier, individuals in the early stages of their careers such as high school and college students. The following literature review covers some of the variables that have been shown to be relevant to the immigrant experience and may have significant influence on career progression questions. Concepts will be presented, defined, and discussed in terms of their impact on the careers of Hispanic immigrants. I open the discussion by briefly identifying Hispanics and offering some demographic characteristics of their group which may be related to upward mobility.
Hispanics in the United States

Who is Hispanic?

The term *Hispanic* is "a label of convenience utilized to refer to those individuals who reside in the United States and who are born in or trace the background of their families to one of the Spanish-speaking Latin American nations or to Spain" (Marin & Marin, 1991, p. 1). Other terms such as Latino/a are often used interchangeably with Hispanic. The Census Bureau defines as Hispanic those who indicate that "their origin was Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or some other Hispanic origin. For example, people who indicate that they are of Mexican origin may be either born in Mexico or of Mexican heritage" (Guzmán, 2001, p. 1). These classifications are more related "to Government labels and to the perceptions of the Anglo-American society than they are to common experiences or identity among the individuals so designated" (Porter & Washington, 1993, p. 141). As a matter of fact, individuals of Hispanic origin usually "see themselves not as Hispanic or Latinos but rather as members of particular nationalities" (Davila, 2003, p. 156), namely Puerto Rican, Mexican, Cuban, etc., and perceive that there is limited unity within the Hispanic community (Bobo, Zubrinsky, Johnson, & Oliver, 1995). Finally, it is important to keep in mind that these labels denote ethnic affiliation, but not racial category, as Hispanics belong to all races. For convenience purposes, and in line with other studies, in this paper the terms Hispanic or Latino/a will be used interchangeably when the discussion relates to the entire group, and Mexican when referring to individuals born in that country only.

As demonstrated in the career theories stated above, socio-economic status, citizenship status, length or residence, and educational attainment can influence career
progression. The Census Bureau offers a wide range of data on the Hispanic population. In the following, I provide some data available on Hispanics in general as well as on the Mexican sub-group in particular, so as to familiarize the reader with the characteristics of this group. I also provide some available data on foreign-born Hispanics, because they are the main focus of this study. For comparative purposes, I include some data on the Anglo, non-Hispanic White population as well. Some of these demographic variables have a direct influence on promotability and are therefore important to take into consideration.

**Demographic Characteristics of the Hispanic Population**

In 2000, 12.5% of the total U.S. population, over 35 million people, were of Hispanic origin (Guzmán, 2001) about half of whom (14.5 million) were foreign-born (Schmidley, 2001). These figures are projected to grow even further, reaching 16% by 2020. However, in the Western states, Hispanics are projected to comprise nearly 26% of the population by 2010 (Judy & D’Amico, 1997). Mexicans actually accounted for more than one-quarter of the overall U.S. foreign-born population in 2000 (Schmidley, 2001). The sub-divisions of the Hispanic population include 66.1% Mexicans, 14.5% Central- and South-Americans, 9% Puerto Ricans, 4% Cubans, and 6.4% other Hispanic (Therrien & Ramirez, 2001). Among the foreign-born Hispanics, most (9.8 million or 67.5%) were from Central America including Mexico. An additional 2.8 million (or 19.3%) were from the Caribbean (which includes Puerto Rico, Cuba and other islands) and 1.9 million (or 13.1%) were from South America. In 2000, 15.2% of Nevada’s population were foreign-born, well above the national average of 10.4 percent. In the same year, 19.7% of Nevada’s population were of Hispanic origin, close to 394,000 people. Of the Hispanics
living in Nevada, 72.5% were Mexican, 2.6% Puerto Rican, 2.9% Cuban and 21.9% other Hispanic. The state of Nevada currently has the fastest growing population in the nation (Yax, 2003).

Demographic characteristics of the Hispanic population made available by the U.S. Census include most typical region of residence, average age, education level, tenure in the U.S., and citizenship status. These are presented below.

Region of residence.

Most Hispanics (46.4%) are concentrated within a metropolitan area, significantly more than non-Hispanic Whites (21.2%). Hispanics are also most likely to reside in the Western states (see Table 1). Some within group differences show that “Latinos of Mexican origin were most likely to live in the West (56.8%) and in the South (32.6%), Puerto Ricans were most likely to live in the Northeast (63.9%), and Cubans were highly concentrated in the South (80.1%)” (Therrien & Ramirez, 2001, p. 2). Living in large metropolitan areas, many Hispanics tend to reside within ethnic enclaves. This often limits their exposure to North American society and culture thus slowing down their acculturation (Bohon, 2001), English language acquisition, and development of social and cultural capital. This may influence career progression given the impact of these variables on individual promotability.

Table 1  Population by Hispanic Origin and Region of Residence in 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Non-Hispanic White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Age.

Hispanics as a group are younger than the rest of the population (see Table 2)—their median age is 24.7 years (Guzmán, 2001) as compared to 35.3 years for the non-Hispanic White population. In addition, some within-group differences show that Mexicans living in the U.S. are younger than Cubans living in this country. Being younger and having less U.S.-based work experience, may reduce the promotability of Hispanic immigrants in North American workplaces.

Table 2 Population by Hispanic Origin and Age Group in 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Non-Hispanic White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 18 years</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-64 years</td>
<td>59.0%</td>
<td>62.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 of more years</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Educational attainment.

Educational attainment for Hispanics is also significantly different from that of the non-Hispanic White population (see Table 3). Educational attainment, however, varies significantly among Latinos. "Cubans and other Hispanics were most likely to have graduated from high school (73% and 71.6% respectively) compared with Mexicans (51%)....the proportion who had attained a bachelor's degree ranged from 23 percent for Cubans to 6.9 percent for Mexicans" (Therrien & Ramirez, 2001, p. 4). In addition, foreign-born Hispanics differ from overall Hispanics living in the United States. High school completion rates for foreign-born Mexicans was 33.8%, which was significantly lower than the high school completion rates for individuals from South America (79.6%)
(Schmidley, 2001). Mexican immigrants, who are the focus of this study, may experience limited career opportunities given their low educational attainment.

Table 3  
Population by Hispanic Origin and Educational Attainment in 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Attainment</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Non-Hispanic White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 9\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9\textsuperscript{th} to 12\textsuperscript{th} grade (no diploma)</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate or some college</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree or more</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(As a percent of each population 25 years and older) Source: Therrien & Ramirez (2001).

**U.S. residence and citizenship status.**

Length of residence in the U.S. is an important variable to consider when studying Hispanics because it influences variables such as English proficiency, acculturation, legal status, and the development of social and cultural capital—variables which are related to upward mobility. “The median length of residence in the United States [for the overall foreign-born]...was 14.4 years in 2000 compared with 12.2 years in 1990” (Schmidley, 2001, p. 3). Individuals from Latin America have an average residence of 13.5 years.

In terms of citizenship status, 28.3% of the immigrants from Latin America are U.S. citizens. These low proportions are attributable primarily to the low figure for Central Americans (21.1%), most of whom are from Mexico. Not holding citizenship status could be related to perceptions of reduced security, and lesser rights among immigrants, which could impact ethnic-identity and perceived discrimination—two variables that could impact the desire for upward mobility.
Hispanic Immigration

Large Hispanic groups, predominantly Mexican, were incorporated into the continental United States in 1848 when Mexican territories became part of the U.S. as part of the peace treaty signed between the two countries. Immigration also brought many Hispanics to North America. The Mexican revolutionary period of 1910, led to the immigration of those deprived and threatened by the revolution (Fabrega, 1970). Some Hispanics, mostly Mexican as well, immigrated through special government programs created to bring in laborers for building the railroads and working on farms before and during the Second World War (Marín & Marín, 1991) such as the 1942 Bracero program (Fabrega, 1970). Hispanic migration was, and is, motivated predominantly by economic reasons. This is especially true for Mexican immigrants because “conditions for most workers [in Mexico] remain much lower than those of the workers in the United States” (Marshall, 1978, p. 167). This is still so today, with persistently high unemployment rates as well as very low minimum wages. “Per capita income in the United States is more than three times that of Mexico, even after adjusting for differences in purchasing power” (Borjas, 1999, p. 47).

The decision to immigrate often depends on the ratio of human capital to payoff (Borjas, 1999). In countries where the payoff to human capital is low, skilled workers will be likely to immigrate towards better economic opportunities. In countries where payoff to human capital is high (such as in Mexico) low skilled individuals are likely to immigrate. This is typical of developing countries with unequal distribution of incomes: “skills tend to flow to those markets that offer the highest value” (Borjas, 1999, p. 49). In addition,
Mexican migration is circular, clandestine, and motivated by economic desperation. Family links in the U.S. also play a large role in Mexican-U.S. migration. Mexicans, therefore, may have a smaller range of destination choices and may be more likely to view their migration as temporary (Bohon, 2001, p. 119).

In summary, some immigration is driven by a search for different or better quality of life opportunities or family reunions, some immigrants are refugees—being forced out of, or fleeing their countries—and yet others relocate temporarily but subsequently seek to remain in the U.S. (Nesdale, Rooney, & Smith, 1997). It is of value to recognize the different motivations of immigration because they have been shown to influence the acculturation process (Mendoza & Martínez, 1981) and as a result, could influence career progression as well.

An individual who left his or her country out of dissatisfaction, with no intention of returning, would probably have different attitudes toward the cultural customs of the receiving society than would an individual who left out of economic necessity and who had strong desires to return home (Mendoza & Martinez, 1981, p. 72).

This will possibly influence one’s desire to invest time and effort into acquiring skills necessary for success and upward mobility in the U.S. labor market such as English language acquisition. Individuals who migrated to the U.S. for financial reasons in order to offer better lives to their families, as well as assistance to family members who remained in the home country, may be primarily focused on that goal. As a result, they may be disinclined to acquire the necessary skills for upward mobility such as English
acquisition or computer skills. Time dedicated to gaining new skills is time spent away from earning money necessary for family support. In addition, special effort to interact with North Americans so as to enhance one’s social and cultural capital—also relevant to career progression—is also not very likely when one intends to return home at some point.

Immigration and the North American Workplace

The influx of immigrants, Hispanic and other, into the U.S., has significantly changed the face of North American society and workplaces. According to Census Bureau projections, by 2020 non-Hispanic Whites will comprise only 64% of the total population. African Americans are predicted to comprise about 13% (up from 11.5% in the 1980s), Asians will reach approximately 6.5% (up from 1.6% in the 1980s), and Hispanics will comprise more than 16% (up from 9% in the 1990s) of the American total population by 2020 (Judy & D'Amico, 1997). This diversity in North American society is also reflected in its workplaces, which are gradually including more minorities and women (Winikow, 1991). "White non-Hispanics, who comprised 76 percent of the total labor force in 1995, will still account for 64 percent of it in 2020.... African Americans will continue to make up approximately 11 percent of the workforce" (Judy & D’Amico, 1997, p. 110). Asians will represent about 6% and Hispanics will represent approximately 14% of the labor force by 2020 (Judy & D’Amico, 1997).

Acculturation—the process through which immigrants adapt to the socio-cultural and psychological characteristics of the host society—has been shown to influence personal values, namely that the values held by higher acculturated foreign-born Mexicans are more similar to the values held by Anglos (Domino & Acosta, 1987). As
values direct behavior (Connor & Becker, 1994), it is likely that acculturation level—and subsequent value changes—may influence career aspirations among immigrants. Furthermore, skills relevant to one’s career progression, such as English language acquisition, have been linked to degree of acculturation (Marin & Marin, 1991). “It is expected that higher levels of acculturation will facilitate the process of career development among Hispanic Americans” (Arbona, 1995, p. 43). Possibly because with time in the U.S., one is able to acquire English skills and enhance one’s social and cultural capital.

The acculturation process has been of great interest to sociologists and other researchers, especially in the U.S.—a country founded on immigration. This process is also important for vocational psychologists studying the career progression of immigrant employees because of the impact of acculturation level on the individual’s life in the United States. In the following section, the evolution of the research on the integration of foreign-born individuals into North American society is described.

Assimilation versus Acculturation

The ‘melting pot’ theorists out of the University of Chicago were the first social scientists to theorize about the process newcomers to America go through. This work, which began in 1914, proposed a three stage model of contact, accommodation and assimilation (Persons, 1987). Assimilation usually refers to a complete loss of the individual’s original ethnic identity as he or she is absorbed into the dominant culture. In this presumably progressive and irreversible process, the newcomer learns to accommodate the dominant culture, eventually becoming part of it—disappearing into
the 'melting pot'. In the late 1930’s a new group of social scientists proposed the term *acculturation*, introducing the idea that culture and values might be resistant to change with intercultural contact (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). These researchers believed that immigrants could decide what cultural elements they wished to surrender and which ones they wished to retain. Acculturation is defined as a gradual, multifaceted, bicultural or multicultural process. This means that an individual can “participate actively in several cultures without having to negate one’s ethnic identity” (Domino, 1992, p. 57) nor suffer an internal conflict of identity (Trueba, 2002). “Immigrants manage to acquire and maintain different identities that co-exist and function without conflict in different contexts simultaneously” (Trueba, 2002, p. 10).

About four decades later, the first psychological perspectives of acculturation were introduced (Berry, 1980; Mendoza & Martinez, 1981; Teske & Nelson, 1974). These models were multidimensional in structure, encompassing affective, cognitive, and behavioral adaptations (Mendoza & Martinez, 1981). Furthermore, they recognized that individuals have choices in their acculturation process, and could even move in a reverse direction, toward a revival of their former cultural heritage. Berry (1980) defined acculturation as a process of cultural learning and individual adaptation that occurs when an individual is exposed to a new culture. This can take place in any of six areas: language use, cognitive style, identity, personality, attitudes, and stress. Mendoza and Martinez (1981) offered a four-level model of acculturation, which integrates degree of assimilation of the dominant culture and degree of extinction of the native cultural customs. The different levels of acculturation include (a) cultural resistance—lack of assimilation; (b) cultural shift—simultaneous assimilation and extinction; (c) cultural
incorporation—assimilation without extinction; and (d) cultural transmutation—
"alteration of certain elements of both cultures to create a third and somewhat unique
subcultural identity" (p. 74). Berry’s (1980) four stage model proposes bi-directional
movement, toward the host culture or away from it. The stages of cultural adaptation in
his model are: assimilation, integration, rejection and deculturation. In accord with
previous models, assimilation refers to the relinquishing of one’s cultural identity in the
movement towards the host culture. Integration refers to a “maintenance of cultural
integrity as well as movement to become an integral part of the larger societal
framework” (Berry, 1980, p. 13). Berry’s (1980) model is unique in that it also includes
the stages of cultural rejection and deculturation. Rejection refers to one’s withdrawal
from the host culture, and may result in separation while deculturation is a process of
ethnic revival, through which an ethnic minority seeks to revive its ancestral language
and culture (Berry, 1980).

The concept of a multidimensional model of acculturation continued to develop
(Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Padilla, 1980). A subsequent model included two constructs:
cultural awareness and ethnic loyalty. The degree of a person’s acculturation could be
determined by the amount of cultural knowledge he or she possessed. Cultural
knowledge includes familiarity with language, history, art, music, values, and standards
of behavior. Ethnic loyalty refers to the individual’s preference of one cultural
orientation over the other, and it acts alongside cultural awareness to determine
acculturation. For example, ethnic loyalty can slow the acculturation process even when
one’s ancestral cultural knowledge is limited. In addition, ethnic loyalty can be
influenced in different ways by social factors. For instance, one individual may respond
to discrimination with increased ethnic loyalty while another may prefer to adapt to the majority culture—the outcome being reduced ethnic loyalty.

Ethnic loyalty may influence one’s desire to become upwardly mobile. For example, Mexican workers may prefer to avoid a promotion if it could separate them from the cultural group that generates their identity (Thiederman, 1991). In addition, if upward mobility is perceived as a North-American White value, individuals feeling strong ethnic loyalty may reject it as undesirable. For example, successful Hispanic women felt that their co-ethnic peers viewed them as having sold out for being successful in American standards (Gomez et al., 2001). Could upward mobility at work be identified as a way of reducing one’s ethnic loyalty among Mexican immigrants?

Environmental factors also play a role in acculturation. It has been shown that cultural ecologies lead to different outcomes in terms of acculturation—living in an ethnic enclave, for example, may reduce the press to assimilate. As mentioned above, most Mexican immigrants live in metropolitan areas and prefer to live within ethnic enclaves. “The typical Mexican lives in a locality where there are five times as many Mexicans as one would expect to find if the Mexican population were randomly sorted across the United States” (Borjas, 1999, p. 55). Living within the enclave limits human capital depreciation that occurs at the time of entry because it offers various jobs that do not require high skill levels or English fluency (Bohon, 2001). It also offers other forms of support other than employment opportunities, such as services in one’s native language, goods from the home country, and support through solidarity and cultural familiarity (Bohon, 2001; Tienda, 1982). The ethnic enclave, therefore, “can act as a buffer mechanism permitting [the migrant] a pause for personal and social
reorganization” (Brody, 1970, p. 19). However, while many immigrants may perceive the ethnic enclave as a safe harbor, remaining within its confines, may actually hurt the individual in the long run because he or she fails to accumulate cultural and social capital. It may cause the Mexican ethnic group to be trapped in a vicious cycle, slowing, or preventing all together, the long-run development of this group because it creates incentives

*not to leave and not to acquire the skills that might be useful in the larger national market....The clustering may effectively hinder the move to better-paying jobs by reducing the immigrants’ incentives to learn the culture and language of the American labor market (Borjas, 1999, p. 55).*

This is so especially for those who use the ethnic enclave as a terminal geographical point (Brody, 1970).

Padilla and Perez’s (2003) approach to the acculturation process adds to past models in that they acknowledge the impact of the contact between members of different cultural groups. They recognize the fact that newcomers are not always free to choose the acculturation strategy they prefer. These researchers believe that “social stigmas affect the acculturation and adaptation of immigrants. The prevailing attitudes, whether positive or negative, have the power of constraining the adoption of the social identity of the host country and thereby the acculturation trajectory of newcomers” (p. 51).

Newcomers who feel their social identity is devalued may resist acculturation, even when they are culturally competent in the dominant culture. This is seconded by Porter and Washington (1993) who state that racial discrimination contributes to the “retention of an
ethnic identity in spite of long years of settlement in the United States and loss of ethnic language by some members of the group” (Porter & Washington, 1993, p. 141).

Perceptions of discrimination and feelings of having a devalued social identity, may cause Hispanic immigrants to distance themselves from the behavioral standards of the host culture—in their personal life as well as in the workplace. For example, a study with minority students suggested that, in an act of ethnic identity preservation, students rejected attitudes and behaviors conducive to school achievement, because they equated them with acting White (Matute-Bianchi, 1986). A similar phenomenon could be occurring in the workplace, limiting the desires of upward mobility among Hispanic immigrants if higher level positions are associated with behaviors associated with the Anglo White population and contradictory to one’s ethnic identity. Furthermore, perceived discrimination could lead individuals to refrain from trying to obtain a promotion because they will not expect to be granted one. Similarly, there will be limited motivation to invest in increasing one’s human capital (through new skill and English language acquisition) because, when one feels discriminated against, the relationship between educational attainment and career prospect is perceived as minimal.

Interestingly, researchers (Diaz, Buehler, Castro, & Ward, 1993) have found that Hispanics living on the West Coast are less acculturated than Hispanics living on the East Coast. This may be due to the fact that the Hispanics living on the West Coast are more recent immigrants, predominantly of Mexican origin while the Hispanics on the East Coast are mostly Puerto Rican (Diaz, et al., 1993). The lower acculturation levels of Mexican immigrants living on the West Coast may contribute to the preservation of, and stronger adherence to, Latin American cultural values. It would be beneficial to identify
these values and examine their possible influence in the work place. The following section describes in detail different Hispanic cultural values and how these cultural values play a role in the work place. Each cultural value is defined and contrasted with the corresponding Anglo cultural value.

**Hispanic Cultural Values**

Culture consists of a set of taken for granted assumptions including rules of behavior and values that come into play in human interaction. “Values form the core of culture. It is from values that other elements of culture arise….values tell us what to care about, what to strive for, and how to behave” (Thiederman, 1991, p. 81). Connor and Becker (1994) define values as global beliefs about desirable end states or modes of behavior “that underlie attitudinal processes. In particular, they serve as the basis for making choices” (p. 68). Because values guide behavior, it is important to recognize and understand the differences among value sets held by Hispanic and other employees. “Cultural factors…can also affect the importance of work, career choice, and attainment and need to be examined in the context of people’s life experiences” (Krumboltz & Coon, 1995, p. 394).

Past studies have shown that Hispanic and European Americans hold different values based on their different ethnic cultures, beyond socioeconomic factors (Irizarry-Flores, 1997; Valencia, 1989). These differences persist across time for several reasons. First, some Hispanics tend not to acculturate into American culture because of residential separation—living in ethnic enclaves—preserving their language, culture, and other traditions. Second, new Hispanic immigrants keep coming into the U.S., many of whom
do not sever their ties with their home country (Valencia, 1989), engaging in circular
migration and planning to eventually return home (Porter & Washington, 1993). Third,
many Hispanics are located in limited job sectors—working with other immigrants—
which also prevents them from coming into frequent contact with North American
individuals and culture (Porter & Washington, 1993).

Some core values have been identified as being shared by most Hispanics,
regardless of country of birth, dominant language, or other demographic characteristics.
However, these values do not apply equally to all Hispanics, because acculturation is
influenced by age of immigration, socioeconomic status and education level. Therefore,
some differences between Hispanic sub-groups may exist. In addition, one must keep in
mind that these cultural values are generalizations. They represent only general
tendencies and patterns typical to certain groups but can certainly not be regarded as fully
applicable to each individual.

The acculturation process plays an important part in value shifts among
immigrants. For example, some differences in values have been identified between
highly acculturated and low acculturated Hispanics (Domino & Acosta, 1987).
Acculturation, however, is slow, especially for individuals who arrived in the U.S. as
adults. “The immigrating adults are unlikely to trade their home-country values for those
of the host country; at best, they make small adaptations” (Hofstede, 2001, p. 430).

When studying career progression among Hispanics, it is important to understand
cultural values because they guide attitudes and behavior (Connor & Becker, 1994;
Guzman, 2001; Irizarry-Flores, 1997; Thiederman, 1991) and may influence an
individual’s decision whether to pursue upward mobility or not. While some Hispanics
enter supervisory and managerial positions, they remain the most under-represented minority in these types of positions (Elliott & Smith, 2001; Walkup, 2000). The scarcity of Hispanics in managerial positions has also been identified in the hospitality industry in general (Thomas, 1995), and in the Las Vegas hospitality industry in particular (Benston, 2003; S. Raymaker, personal communication, May 2002). Cultural values may be one of the root causes of this situation because values influence what people consider important and valuable (Connor & Becker, 1994; Guzman, 2001; Irizarry-Flores, 1997; Thiederman, 1991). Thiederman (1991), a long time organizational diversity consultant, proposed links between cultural values and work which include individual behaviors as well as attitudes toward promotion. Pelled and Xin (1997) offer additional linkages between culture and individual behaviors at work. While, their propositions are not based on empirical research, they are nevertheless interesting and are therefore presented below.

The values identified as predominantly Hispanic were defined in Hofstede’s (1980) seminal culture studies and in the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) project (House, Javidan, Hanges, & Dorfman, 2002). Hofstede’s study was conducted in the late 1970s and covered 26 nations. The GLOBE project is ongoing and so far has focused on culture and leadership in 61 countries. The cultural values applicable to the Hispanic population, as they appear in the above mentioned studies include collectivism, simpatia (friendliness) and respeto (respect), familialism, high power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, present time orientation, and fatalismo (Hofstede, 1980; House et al., 2002; Kluckhorn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Marin & Marin, 1991; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). In the following paragraphs, each
cultural value is defined in detail and contrasted with traditional North American Anglo values. Most importantly, the impact of each value on work-related attitudes and behaviors is also discussed, specifically those attitudes that may influence the desire for, and motivation to pursue upward mobility.

Collectivism

Individualism and collectivism refer to the degree to which members of a society focus on satisfying personal interests (individualism) over the interests of the group (collectivism). Individualist societies value personal freedom as a way to improve one’s quality of life (Kluckhorn & Strrodbeck, 1961), as well as any form of reward that singles out the individual for attention (Thiederman, 1993). Anglos have been identified as more achievement-oriented, individualistic and competitive, preferring to work alone rather than in teams or groups than are Hispanics (Marín & Marin, 1991). People in individualistic societies derive their identity from individual achievement (Thiederman, 1991). This is the basis for the prevalence of “employee of the month” programs, for example. In focus group discussions regarding the attributes of desirable jobs, Anglos emphasized “a sense of personal fulfillment and creative expression...as well as a need for validation and appreciation from others” (Bobo et al., 1995, p. 60).

The emphasis in a collectivist society, on the other hand, is on the needs, objectives and points of view of an in-group rather than the individual. “Collectivism does not mean negation of the individual’s well being or interest; it is implicitly assumed that maintaining the group’s well being is the best guarantee for the individual” (Hofstede, 2001, p. 211). Also referred to as allocentrism (Marin & Marin, 1991), collectivism is associated with “high levels of personal interdependence,...conformity,
readiness to be influenced by others, mutual empathy, willingness to sacrifice for the welfare of the in-group members, and trust of the members of the in-group” (Marin & Marin, 1991, p. 11), as well as “obedience to one’s parents and the traditions of the family or group” (Brown, 2002, p. 50).

Individualistic and collectivist values identified by Hofstede (1980) in his original study conducted in the 1970s, were reexamined by Fernandez et al. (1997) in a later study, conducted in 1989 and 1990. These researchers collected data in nine countries and compared their findings to Hofstede’s original conclusions. They found that both American and Mexican respondents ranked high on individualism. While the American sample ranked higher than the Mexican sample, both samples ranked above the mean for individualism. The researchers argue that this shift in the Mexican culture is due to extensive economic development in Mexico, which explains the tendency to place greater emphasis on individual rewards. The existence of U.S. based organizations such as *Hispanic Hospitality Employees Recognition for Outstanding Service*, an organization which rewards individuals for outstanding performance (Bain, 2002), possibly indicates that individual rewards are no longer considered inappropriate by Hispanics.

Collectivist and/or individualistic tendencies can influence work relationships and values. In an individualistic culture, work relations are seen as a business transaction, which determine the relationships between employees and employers. “Poor performance on the part of the employee or a better pay offer from another employer are legitimate and socially accepted reasons for terminating a work relationship” (Hofstede, 2001, p. 237). In collectivist cultures, work relationships are regarded as friendships, and mutual loyalty is much more important. Individuals from a collectivist cultural
background may place great importance on establishing good, cooperative and respectful work relationships. They are more likely to prefer to work in teams and place emphasis on group achievement and group decision making (Irizarry-Flores, 1997). Personal achievements such as occupational prestige and high earnings, greatly valued in the North American individualistic society, may not be regarded the same way in collectivist cultures, which may reduce the desires for upward mobility among Hispanic immigrants. However, cultural shifts in Mexico as identified by Fernandez et al. (1997), and acculturation may diminish these differences across cultures.

*Simpatia*

*Simpatia* (friendliness or kindness) "emphasizes the need for behaviors that promote smooth and pleasant social relationships" (Marin & Marin, 1991, p. 12) as well as the maintenance of pleasant demeanor and repression of anger. Hispanic individuals usually strive towards harmonious interpersonal relationships and stress the importance of having a network of friends and coworkers to turn to for help (Pelled & Xin, 1997). This possibly increases their need for high levels of personal interaction in the workplace. Hispanics also tend to avoid conflict, place an emphasis on dignified and respectful behaviors, be evasive or ambiguous when handling negative confrontations, and place value on trying to achieve congruence among various people’s goals. Two related cultural values are *respeto* and *personalismo*. *Respeto* or respect, dictates differential behavior toward others based on age, gender, or authority (Antshel, 2002). When discussing desirable job attributes, Latinos emphasized the need to feel respected and comfortable as one of the most important job attributes (Bobo et al., 1995).

*Personalismo* stresses the importance of personal relationships and also deals with
definition of personal space. "Latinos generally prefer to be closer to each other in space that Anglo-Americans" (Antshel, 2002, p. 440). Therefore when a non-Latino manager places him- or herself at the North American, customary three-feet or more distance from their Latino employees, they may be perceived as not only distant but also disinterested.

Thiederman (1991) found that in a dialogue between Mexican workers and their supervisors, there was a tendency for the workers to avoid direct negative confrontations and hesitate to tell bad news. Similarly, Gabrieldis et al. (1997) found that Mexican students "preferred conflict resolution styles that emphasized concern for the outcomes of others (accommodation and collaboration) to a greater degree than did [North-American] students" (p. 661). For example, in experiments with Mexican and North American children, Mexicans tended to be more cooperative in interpersonal activities while North Americans were more competitive (Diaz-Guerrero, 1978). This is significantly different from the Anglo preference for the direct approach to issues. North Americans are categorized by a 'straight talk' communication style (Thiederman, 1993) and they often regard work relations as a business transaction (Hofstede, 2001). Contrarily, Hispanics consider it necessary to engage in some small talk—la platica—before initiating formal transactions (Gomez et al., 2001).

The cultural value of simpatia may influence the co-worker involvement preference for Hispanics. Co-worker involvement preference refers to the degree to which an employee values association with co-workers. In the U.S., relationships with co-workers are likely "to be more distant, mirroring relationships in the larger society" (Pelled & Xin, 1997, p. 190). However, the Mexican culture stresses the importance of friendships and collegial relations at work and Mexican workers are more likely to assist
co-workers than North American workers are. For example, company sponsored social events are going to be more attractive to Mexican workers than to Anglo workers (Pelled & Xin, 1997).

In focus groups with English speaking Latinos, participants “focused heavily on the need for respect from supervisors, clients, and co-workers” (Bobo et al., 1995, p. 61) which seems to provide support for the importance individuals of Latin American cultures place on maintaining good interpersonal relationships and for on respect. This could possibly act as a deterrent to seeking out or accepting a supervisory position, which would potentially be detrimental to interpersonal relationships because such positions often require one to discipline employees. Mexican workers may not “seek promotions if to do so would separate them from the cultural group that generates their identity” (Thiederman, 1991, p. 98) or ask them to manage—and possibly discipline—their current peers. In addition, because respect for elders plays an important part in the Hispanic culture, “for Hispanics to seek promotions over countrymen older than themselves would be considered inappropriate (Thierderman, 1991).

Finally, in relationship-based societies, especially in the political systems of those countries, loyalty preferences determine lines of influence. This means that “commitment is to persons not to policies” (Riding, 1989, p. 77). For example, a study comparing work attitudes of Mexican Americans to those of Euro Americans found that Mexican Americans were more likely to say that people get ahead by lucky breaks or help from other people than from hard work or from both equally (Weaver, 2000). This is not uncommon in a network culture in which “managers are selected on the basis of family links, personal recommendations, and … [where] political pull [is frequently used]
in order to get things done or to secure special favors" (Webber, 1969, p. 372). Such perceptions may lead individuals to feel that personal ties with a decision maker is necessary in order to be promoted and individuals not possessing such ties may be reluctant to try to pursue a different position.

Familialism

"Familialism is a cultural value that involves individuals' strong identification with and attachment to nuclear and extended families and strong feelings of loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity among members of the same family" (Marín & Marin, 1991, p. 13). The extended family provides a natural support system, which offers protection from physical and emotional stress. The extended family often includes compadres or comadres who are close family friends and are given the status of relatives due to special friendships or involvement in the family (as godparents, for example). "For most Mexicans the family remains the pivot of their lives. It is not a matter of choice; it is simply the way society is organized...living in nuclear families" (Riding, 1989, p. 239). The familialism value has been found to remain relatively unchanged during the acculturation process (Hernandez, 1995) as "patterns of intrafamilial relationships and interactions do not appear to differ substantially from one generation to the next, despite the fact that English becomes the primary language and family members become active participants in U.S. society" (Rueschenberg & Buriel, 1995, p. 22). In addition, family considerations are paramount often come even before the self (Hernandez, 1995) as "individualistic tendencies are often subordinated to family concerns and interests" (Nee & Sanders, 2001, p. 391) and career choice may be influenced by parental input (Hernandez, 1995; Leong & Serafica, 2001).
The familialism value is significantly different from the Anglo view of the family, which is seen as the environment in which the child is socialized into an individualistic society. As adults, individuals must count on themselves to get ahead based on individualism and self-sufficiency. American values do not negate the importance of family, they simply mean that people value self-reliance and independence from the family unit (Thiederman, 1991). For Mexicans who live in the U.S., the family can serve to “protect its members from the negative effects of acculturation, such as prejudice, discrimination, and the imposition of minority status” (Rueschenberg & Buriel, 1995, p. 25).

At work, Hispanic individuals may relate the work group to the family concept, preferring cooperative, nurturing and affective work relationships (Irizarry-Flores, 1997), possibly preferring to work in groups or teams. For example, “in Mexico, being part of a company means being part of a family…. [and] firing a person has serious implications” (Thiederman, 1991, p. 98). This attitude may lead some Hispanics to expect that the company “would assume the responsibility of training [them] and helping [them] to advance….expect[ing] the same nurturing support they received in their cultural environments to be present on their job” (Stevenson, 1997, p. 14). They may further expect their managers to seek to know them as human beings, asking about family and life interests and have more respect for those who do. The importance of family also renders certain work benefits especially attractive to Hispanics such as flexible work hours and tuition reimbursement programs for employees’ children (Keliman, 2002).

When a job change is perceived to improve one’s family life it would possibly appeal to Hispanic immigrants. However, a promotion into a supervisory or managerial
position may be perceived as detrimental to one’s family life because, despite the possibly higher pay associated with it, such a position also requires more work hours. Hispanic workers may turn down promotions that “leave less time for relatives and spouses or that result in decreased opportunity for overtime income—income needed to send home to family members” (Thiederman, 1991, p. 100).

**Power Distance**

Power distance refers to the degree to which the members of a society accept the unequal distribution of power in society (pluralist vs. elitist). It is related to the Hispanic cultural value of *respeto*, a construct which “accentuates the importance of deference or respect for individuals who occupy roles of higher prestige, recognition, and power in society” (Yep, 1995, p. 202). The power distance dimension was “derived from country mean scores on...three survey questions [which] dealt with perceptions of subordinates’ fear of disagreeing with superiors and of superiors’ actual decision making styles, and with the decision making style that subordinates preferred in their bosses” (Hofstede, 2001, p. 79). Individuals from high power distance cultures, such as some Latin American countries, are not likely to question authority or seek participation in decision making in the workplace because they accept the unequal power distribution at work.

The low power distance Anglo culture, on the other hand, does not oppose questioning authority directly and values participatory management styles. Fernandez et al. (1997) confirmed the initial power distance ranking provided by Hofstede (1980) identifying the American respondents as low on power distance and Mexican respondents as high on power distance. Individuals from highly stratified cultures (high power distance) will not speak up freely to their superiors (Webber, 1969). They also “value
conformity and obedience and support autocratic and authoritarian attitudes from those in charge of organizations" (Marín & Marín, 1991, p. 15). “Mexican...workers tend to feel more comfortable with an authoritarian boss” (Thiederman, 1991, p. 111) and will prefer not to call a manager by his or her first name. In a study with Mexican workers in a North American firm located in Mexico, Harrison and Hubbard (1998) found that employees indicated “greater organizational commitment when their supervisor exhibited behaviors of initiating structure (i.e., performance emphasis, role clarification, problem solving, planning, coordinating, and discipline)” (p. 619). Power distance has been linked to education and occupational status in that “the lower-education, lower-status occupations tended to produce high power distance values, and the higher-education, higher-status occupations tended to produce low power distance values” (Hofstede, 2001, p. 88).

At work, Hispanics, who come from high power distance cultures, may be reluctant to participate or voice their opinions to their supervisors or tell management of problems on the job (Thiederman, 1991). Pelled and Xin (1997) proposed (but did not test) that the high on power-distance culture of Mexico, in which individuals expect and are comfortable with differentials in class, status, and authority, are not conducive to an appreciation of vertical job involvement. Workers in such a culture are apt to be uncomfortable assuming some of the decision making authority of their supervisors or expressing ideas or suggestions to those at higher organizational levels (p. 191).
This may hurt Hispanics indirectly because it could influence the way in which non-Hispanic managers perceive them. "Just as culture tells us how to behave, it also colors our interpretation of the behavior of others" (Thiederman, 1991, p. 3). In a culture that values participation (such as the Anglo culture), such behaviors may hurt the possible career advancement of Hispanics because managers may interpret their behaviors as a sign of lack of interest or indifference. As a result, managers may neglect to encourage and/or support Hispanic employees to become upwardly mobile.

The significant social stratification in Mexico may also play a role in the upward mobility aspirations of Mexican immigrants. Because most Mexican immigrants to the U.S. come from rural areas having worked as "campesinos" (farmers) (Deforest, 1994), and holding low educational attainment, they may be even more likely to accept social stratification as a given. Holding a world-view that is accepting of social stratification as a given and unchangeable situation, may prevent individuals from trying to advance. These individuals may accept and be satisfied with low-status occupations that an individual holding White North American values may look down upon.

Finally, individuals from high power distance cultures are less likely to trust individuals in power positions within organizations. A study comparing work attitudes of Mexican-Americans to those of Euro-Americans found that Mexican-Americans were less likely to say they trust top business leaders running large corporations, and more likely to say they have confidence in union leaders (Weaver, 2000). This may influence the degree of trust Mexican immigrants place in their managers and the degree to which they would be comfortable asking their manager for assistance and/or guidance to increase personal growth.
Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance refers to the degree to which the members of a society are uncomfortable with or threatened by uncertain, ambiguous, or unstructured situations. Hofstede's (1980) rankings placed the Mexican culture high on the uncertainty avoidance dimension and the Anglo culture low on this dimension. Employees in a culture ranking high on uncertainty avoidance would be more satisfied with managers who rate high on initiating structure, namely providing role clarification, planning, coordination and discipline, because this type of management approach reduces uncertainty (Hofstede, 2001). Such employees “tend to have higher levels of employment stability, tend to be more concerned with a fear of failure, and are less likely to admit dissatisfaction with an employer” (Hofstede, 2001, p. 160). In addition, the Hispanic culture gives a certain amount of importance to ‘maintaining face’ (Thiederman, 1991, p. 160). The concern with being turned down when applying for a promotion, something which may cause loss of face, may therefore lead Hispanic to avoid it all together.

At work, individuals from cultures ranking high on uncertainty avoidance will tend to stay with one employer and remain in the same position for extended periods of time. This may stem from the fact that for “many ethnic immigrant workers [who] share precarious socioeconomic status, job security often takes on great importance” (Thiederman, 1991, p. 164). Any career move perceived to represent a threat to job security may therefore be less desirable. Pelled and Xin (1997) proposed (but did not empirically test) that Hispanic employees would be more “threatened by the change and uncertainty associated with promotions—e.g., new relationships with co-workers and new responsibilities” (p. 190). Anglo managers, who are part of a culture that values
entrepreneurship and personal advancement, may interpret this as a lack of interest or indifference—possibly inferring that Hispanic employees do not desire anything beyond the positions they hold. This may further limit the upward mobility among Hispanics because they may lack managerial support and encouragement.

**Time Orientation and Fatalismo**

Time orientation refers to three types of cultures: past-, present- and future-oriented. Future-oriented societies place an emphasis on planning for the future and being able to delay gratification, as well as on punctuality and efficiency (Marín & Marín, 1991). The basic assumption is that the future can be planned—that it is controllable, based on present behaviors and planning. This implies that greater importance will be given to what one plans to do in the future rather than what one has achieved in the past. North American workers, who were socialized in a future-oriented culture, “place a high priority on planning for retirement, accumulating sick days, and purchasing insurance” (Thiederman, 1991, p. 81). Present-oriented societies, on the other hand, as Hispanics tend to be (Hofstede, 1981; Ulibarri, 1971), “are often described as unable to delay gratification or to plan for the future and as inefficient and not punctual” (Marín & Marín, 1991, p. 16). A present oriented individual believes that it is more important to enjoy life in the present than plan for the future or that it is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things depend on good or bad fortune (Cuéllar, Arnold, & González, 1995). Being present-oriented leads to a more flexible attitude towards time and leads to a lack of ability to create a detailed vision of the future (Brown, 2002). Greater emphasis is placed on “meeting today’s obligations and enjoying the present moment” (Thiederman, 1991, p. 81).
At work, individuals from present-oriented cultures may place less emphasis on punctuality of appointments or task deadlines. “Greater value [is placed] on the quality of interpersonal relationships than on the length of time in which they take place” (Marin & Marin, 1991, p. 16). This is contrary to the Anglo culture in which promptness is valued, appointments are strictly kept, relationships are generally subordinate to schedule (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998), and time spent on unnecessary conversations, small-talk, and social niceties is considered wasted. In addition, a future time perspective has been identified as an important ingredient in the career-planning process because it requires planning. Therefore individuals holding a “present-time orientation may be ‘lacking’ an essential construct: a detailed vision of the future” (Brown, 2002, p. 52).

Such attitudes may limit desires for career progression and upward mobility. The focus on present obligations and duties may lead Hispanics to remain passive in terms of seeking out promotions. They may prefer to retain a secure job, rather than change positions, which may involve the risk losing job specific seniority, full-time status, as well as possible opportunities for overtime work. In addition, because present time orientation limits one’s tendency to plan ahead, individuals may be less likely to invest time and effort into enhancing personal promotability by acquiring skills such as English language or other job-related skills.

A cultural value related to present time orientation is fatalismo. This concept is part of Latino culture and religious beliefs and it is defined as the extent to which people feel their destinies are beyond their control. In a study of adults in the U.S. and in Mexico, Ross, Mirowsky, and Cockerham (1983) showed that Mexicans were more fatalistic than Anglos and were more likely to think that life’s course is determined by
God and must therefore be accepted. Later studies have also identified this tendency among Mexicans (Cuéllar, Arnold, & González, 1995; Guzman, 2001; Justin, 1997; Neff & Hoppe, 1993). For example, Guzman (2001) found that students who were more fatalistic demonstrated less positive attitudes towards education and school. *Fatalismo* emphasizes external locus of control and could lead to passivity by promoting a sense of helplessness in individuals to a degree that taking a proactive orientation may appear futile. Sue and Sue (1990), however, warn that while fatalism is often attributed to the Mexican culture, it may be more characteristic of social class. Namely, poor people learn through negative experiences that powerful others and unpredictable forces control their lives (Sue & Sue, 1990). At work, the belief that one’s life is determined by good or bad fortune and that personal planning will have little impact on one’s future, may lead individuals to adopt a passive approach to career progression. Thus, Mexican immigrants may be less likely to actively seek upward mobility or attempt to improve their skills and become more promotable because fatalistic attitudes limit the correlation identified by the individual between personal actions in the present and future outcomes.

Ulibarri (1971) identified a ‘fatalistic attitude’ among Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants working in the United States. Respondents in his study seemed to “have resigned themselves to the problem of poverty instead of trying to fight it any longer [stating that] they had exhausted their own potential for education for themselves” (p. 168-169). Many immigrants feel powerless and therefore do not attempt to change their situation—they tend to accept their life as it is and “lack the motivation to make changes” (Martinez, 2002, p. 10). For example, experiments conducted with Mexican and American children showed that Mexican children, when given an assignment, were
more likely to have a “coping style based more upon passive obedience and a desire to please than active independence and struggle for mastery” (Diaz-Guerrero, 1978, p. 293).

Barriers to Upward Mobility

As demonstrated above, cultural values may influence one’s desire for, and pursuit of, upward mobility. Other variables may come into play as well. These include additional individual differences such as human and other forms of capital, which determine one’s promotability. Variables unique to the immigrant experience in the U.S. should also be considered. These include various stressors (such as discrimination, subjugation to stereotypes, and the language barrier), social identity, ethnic identity, and status. These variables are important because they have been linked to the formation of self-concept—a central component of several career progression theories (Gottfredson, 2002; Tokar et al., 2003; Super, 1991). Environmental factors that shape the particular social context in which Hispanic immigrants live and work, have also been identified as instrumental in the career progression of ethnic minorities (Gomez et al., 2001; Vondracek & Kawasaki, 1995).

Human Capital and Upward Mobility

Human capital is measured though variables such as age, education, English proficiency, work experience, and tenure in the U.S. (Bohon, 2001). It may play an important role in the limited upward mobility of Hispanics because “employers see human capital investments as an indicator of greater productivity and/or firm commitment and tend to reward workers with greater levels of it” (Baldi & Branch-McBrier, 1997, p. 479). When comparing some of the human capital variables for
Hispanics with Anglos (see demographics section above), Hispanics are at a disadvantage. Indeed, immigrants originating in developing countries will typically have less human capital ... [because] they tend to have less education than their counterparts in the industrialized economies; the less-skilled of the developing countries sometimes have the greatest incentives to migrate to the United States; and the human capital acquired in developing economies is harder to transfer to an industrialized setting (Borjas, 1999, p. 50).

Other forms of capital may also influence promotability, directly and indirectly—namely cultural and social capital. As defined in Chapter One, cultural capital refers to the degree of cultural knowledge one possesses. It may be enhanced by gaining cultural knowledge such as increased familiarity with the Anglo value system, North American communication styles, behavioral standards, and/or job-hunting techniques (Krumboltz & Coon, 1995). Social capital factors also influence promotability because they determine whether one has the sometimes-necessary social ties for promotion. Social capital enhances promotability not only because one may have the right connections sometimes necessary to obtain a job, but also because social connections disseminate information about where and how opportunities can be obtained (Stevenson, 1997). Similarly to human and physical capital, social and cultural capital can be invested in (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

Hispanic immigrants have limited opportunities to enhance their social capital when living in the U.S. because “the racial separation evident in housing, education, and church affiliation limits the opportunities for minorities to develop non-work social ties.
with White men” (Corsun & Costen, 2001, p. 17). Similarly, cultural knowledge and language skills can become instrumental to becoming the supervisor and/or manager in a department or division with a predominantly Latino work force.

Life and Work Stressors

While all individuals may experience stress in their personal or work lives, some stressors appear to be unique to the immigrant population. For example, the separation from a familiar environment and supportive network of family and friends experienced by immigrants can contribute to psychological distress (Escobar, 1998; Miranda & Umhofer, 1998). Part of this stress may stem from ‘culture shock’ and from the work/life challenges immigrants must face which include, among other things, discrimination, and low social status.

Receiving low wages and lowered rates of compensation as a result of not having proper legal documentation or as a result of subtle as well as more obvious forms of discrimination may be particularly specific for certain Hispanic groups. In addition, difficulties in promotion or career advancement that are resultant from inability to speak in the actual language of the dominant culture may be another factor specific to recent immigrant Hispanic groups (Cervantes, 1992, p. 131). Many studies have examined the detrimental effects of stress on the mental health of Hispanic immigrants living in the North America (e.g., Miranda & Umhoefer, 1998; Rogler, Cortes & Malgady, 1991; Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1994). This seems to indicate that stress plays an important and problematic part in the lives of Hispanic immigrants in the United States. For an individual who perceives life to be highly stressful, a job change, even if it carries some positive results, may mean
additional stress. "Entry into a job...usually involves a certain amount of anxiety and apprehension" (Leong & Serafica, 2001, p. 192). The changes associated with a promotion, such as establishing relationships with new co-workers and managers as well as learning new tasks and responsibilities, may be a new source of stress which many immigrants may want to avoid.

Stress can also be increased by the significant life changes immigrants go through, not only on a personal level but also in terms of the work they do. Many of the Mexican immigrants coming to the U.S. were originally farm workers (Deforest, 1994). Changing one’s mind frame from being a farm worker to an employee in a formal enterprise takes a significant adjustment process (Webber, 1969). Occupational shifts in a reverse direction can also prove difficult to handle—when individuals cannot work in their profession because of the lack of English skills and credentialing issues in the North American system. One may consider, for example, the psychological stress encountered by a professional who, unable to transfer his or her credentials from the home country to the U.S., is forced to work in a menial labor job in order to provide for his or her family.

The transition into a new country can also be stressful because of the social place one is assigned to. When an individual finds him- or herself in a low status position, the new situation may have an impact on attitudes and outlook on life. This may lead to a passive approach to live.

Passivity and Learned Helplessness

Assuming low social status can carry some grave consequences such as a sense of powerlessness, subjugation to stereotyping, and feeling marginalized (Martinez, 2002). This has been linked to added stress (Saldaña, 1995) and “when paired with
...repression...can foster the creation of a culture of passivity” (Martinez, 2002, p. 10). This can be even more pronounced given the Hispanic cultural value of fatalismo, which fosters an external locus of control and a resignation to what one perceives as fate.

Hispanic immigrants possibly hold a habitus (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) of passivity because of difficulties they experienced living and working in the United States. Habitus is a “subjective but not individual system of internalized structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group or class” (MacLeod, 1995, p. 15). It is composed of the expectations, attitudes, beliefs and aspirations of the individuals in one’s in-group. Possibly, Hispanic immigrants who have few co-ethnic peers to look up to as role models and do not perceive that Hispanic immigrants are awarded equal opportunities, internalize the perception that little can be done to change their fate. This way, they unknowingly contribute to the perpetuation of the situation. In Bourdieu’s words: “objective structures tend to produce structured subjective dispositions that produce structured actions which, in turn, tend to reproduce objective structure” (MacLeod, 1995, p. 15). Passivity may be promoted given the perception that, because of discrimination, there is little relationship between enhanced educational attainment and/or skills and upward mobility. Could a habitus of passivity and limited expectations for success prevent Hispanic immigrants from trying to improve their occupational status? This passive approach to life has also been referred to as learned helplessness.

Learned helplessness is the result of a cognitive process during which the individual learns “of [the] independence between responses and outcomes and develop[s]...an expectation of future uncontrollability which result[s] in a reduction
the incentive for trying to cope” (Overmier, 2002, p. 5). For example, when undesirable outcomes are frequent, such as failure, individuals may lose the motivation to try to change the outcomes. In humans, learned helplessness has been linked to depression and to aversive outcomes for the individual’s life—including employment settings (Overmier, 2002; Thomas, 1994). Learned helplessness could be prevalent within the Hispanic immigrant community because of the stress associated with the acculturation process. Entering a new socio-cultural environment can be unfamiliar, confusing and overwhelming (Miranda & Umhoefer, 1998). Loss of family structure as well as separation from church and other social groups, breaks down the natural protection these frames provide, exposing Mexican immigrants to more psychological distress (Escobar, 1998).

Researchers have found significant relationships between different acculturation levels and mental health (Miranda & Umhoefer, 1998; Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady, 1991; Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1994). Those most likely to suffer from depression were found to have low and high acculturation levels. A bicultural point was identified between low and high acculturation at which balance is achieved between the retention of supportive and ego-reinforcing traditional cultural elements and the adoption of some of the host society’s instrumental and cultural elements (Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady, 1991). Low acculturation individuals “withdraw from participation in the host culture’s practices...are suspicious of others’ intentions...regard their functional skills as ineffective to meet the requirements of the new environment” (Miranda & Umhoefer, 1998, p. 159) and have increased feelings of helplessness (Melville, 1978). Feeling
powerless to change one's situation in North American society can lead to learned helplessness and a passive attitude to life.

High acculturation, on the other hand, can also carry aversive psychological outcomes because it alienates the individuals from the traditional group. It also "facilitates the internalization of host-society cultural norms, among which are damaging stereotypes and prejudicial attitudes toward Hispanic people. The result of these processes is self-depreciation and ethnic self-hatred in a weakened ego structure" (Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady, 1991, p. 588). Similar feelings of frustration, despair, and even anger were expressed by highly acculturated Puerto Rican college students interviewed regarding their career aspirations. Feeling stripped of their power in society because of the negative portrayal of Latinos in the media, these individuals felt that "the American dream [was] not [theirs]" (Hernandez, 1995, p. 106). They perceived that opportunities were not equally available to all members of society, which brought on feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness (Hernandez, 1995). Perceived discrimination has been linked to higher adherence to ethnic identity (Porter & Washington, 1993), which can also play an important role in promoting or suppressing the desire for upward mobility.

Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity refers to "a person's feelings and attitudes towards affiliation with one's socially ascribed ethnic group versus the dominant or majority group...[the focus being on] how individuals relate to themselves and their own group as a subgroup of the dominant society" (Arbona, 1995, p. 44). It has been shown to be more salient among minorities than among their majority counterparts and play an important role in the
formation in the personality development among ethnic minorities (Arbona, 1995).
Ethnic identity has also been identified as a central and salient part of the self-concept among ethnic minority groups (Miville, Koonce, Darlington, & Whitlock, 2000).

Nesdale, Rooney, and Smith (1997) believe that ethnic identity can help reduce psychological distress because “ethnic identification… provides migrants with personal and external resources that enable them to cope with the stresses and demands of a new culture and hence minimizes psychological distress” (p. 573). These researchers found that pride in membership of an ethnic group was positively related to self-esteem and negatively related to psychological distress (Nesdale, Rooney, & Smith, 1997).

What occurs, however, when one’s ethnic group holds a low status in society and at work? Perceiving discrimination against one’s group was shown to carry deleterious consequences for self-esteem (Leonardelli & Tormala, 2003). The belief that others devalue one’s group ultimately damages one’s own private assessment of the group’s value, “suggesting that individuals internalize others’ opinions of their group, even when those opinions are negative” (Leonardelli & Tormala, 2003, p. 513). This possibly reduces the positive effect of ethnic membership on the self-concept, increasing psychological distress.

Ethnic identity has been linked to acculturation in that “immigrants who see themselves as strongly stigmatized because of their darker skin color or accented English speech, may be less willing to acculturate, believing that such negative views will persist regardless whether they are culturally competent in the dominant culture” (Padilla & Perez, 2003, p. 43). Therefore the environment in which immigrants find themselves as well as the way they are treated are believed to influence the speed and degree of
acculturation. The ways in which individuals may cope with the perception that their group is devalued are explained by social identity theory.

Social Identity Theory

Adult members of contemporary society occupy different social roles (e.g. worker, parent, spouse, union member, etc.). These social roles differ in their salience in terms of their importance for self-identification. According to identity theory, social roles form the basis of an individual's identity and sense of self. The salience of the role acts as a moderator of the degree to which a role influences one's sense of self (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1995). The importance of each role is also related to the social context in which one lives or works. This is explained by social identity theory. Social identity is "that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from knowledge of membership in a social group, together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255). Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) stresses that individuals are not self-contained units of psychological analysis but a result of the larger social units they identify with. These collective frames of reference include different groups, organizations, and cultures. The degree to which an individual identifies with one or more collective units, guides his or her internal structures and processes—people think, feel, and act as members of groups. Hence, cultural groups also play a role in this theory because ethnic group membership forms an individual’s ethnic identity thus influencing and guiding his or her attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors. Social identity theory also posits that one is motivated to identify with a particular social group in order to positively differentiate oneself from others, and as a
way to enhance one’s self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). A negative evaluation of one’s group may have detrimental outcomes in terms of self-esteem and self-concept (Phinney, 1995).

An individual will tend to remain a member of a group and seek membership of new groups if these groups have some contribution to make to the positive aspects of his social identity; i.e. to those aspects of it from which he derives some satisfaction (Tajfel, 1978, p. 64).

Thus, if belonging to a certain group makes me feel good about myself, maintaining affiliation with that group and preserving its positive evaluation will be very important to me.

According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986): (a) people are motivated to maintain a positive self-concept; (b) the self-concept derives largely from group identification; and (c) people establish positive social identities by favorably comparing their in-group against an out-group. An inter-group process of conflict is implied, because when one compares his or her in-group to an out-group, issues of power, hierarchy, status, or resource scarcity necessarily arise. Having a social identity satisfies the human need to belong—it “satisfies the individuals’ simultaneous needs for inclusion and differentiation. In other words, we need to simultaneously fill the need to belong to a social group (e.g., Latino) while maintaining our distinction from another group (e.g., Jewish)” (Padilla & Perez, 2003, p. 43). Social identity theory builds on the contention that self-esteem is a basic human need and that “individuals respond to threats to their identity in a variety of ways that enable them to maintain a positive view of themselves and their own reference group” (Phinney, Chavaria, & Tate, 1992, p. 470).
Furthermore, because self-esteem and ethnic identity are related (Phinney, Chavaria, & Tate, 1992) it becomes important for the individual to maintain a positive ethnic identity.

When the comparison with an out-group results in a disadvantaged position, one has a negative social identity (Mummendey, Kessler, Klink, & Mielke, 1999). Negative social identity can also form when individuals of a minority group hear and internalize negative stereotypes they come across regarding their group. As U.S. tenure increases immigrants are more likely to achieve higher levels of acculturation which have been shown to negatively influence the evaluation on in-group members (Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady, 1991). For instance, later generations of Mexican immigrants to the U.S. have less positive images of Mexican Americans than do foreign-born or first generation Mexican Americans (Buriel & Vasquez, 1982; Dworkin, 1965).

Social identity theory describes three coping mechanisms individuals may engage in when they feel that their social identity is devalued—namely when they perceive a negative social identity. These responses include (a) leaving the group; (b) changing one’s interpretation of the group attributes so as to either justify unwelcome features (e.g. low status) or make them more acceptable through interpretation; and (c) engage in social action to promote changes in the situation (Tajfel, 1978). Applying these responses, or coping mechanisms, to the immigrant situation, an immigrant who feels his or her social identity is devalued by the majority group could adopt one of three strategies. First, he or she could choose to distance him- or herself from the ethnic group through acculturation and assimilation. For example, if an individual perceives most Mexicans to hold low-status, menial labor type jobs, he or she may strive to improve his or her occupational standing so as to distance him- or herself from other co-ethnic peers.
Alternatively, the individual could search for positive aspects of his or her ethnic group to justify the features not welcomed by the majority culture, or seek features he or she deems as superior to the majority culture. For example, one may recognize that one’s social group has problems but choose to focus on the positive aspects of the group, “such as role models who exemplify the best characteristics of the group” (Phinney, Chavaria, & Tate, 1992, p. 470). Individuals may take pride in being a good worker or in having strong family values. This may reduce the individual’s desire for upward mobility if a higher level position may impact the individual’s identity, such as the identity of a hard worker who does physical labor and does it well, or an individual committed to family before career. Finally, an immigrant whose social identity is devalued could engage in social action—such as the Chicano movement of the 1960s—to either gain acceptance by the majority culture or change aspects of his or her own ethnic group.

These coping mechanisms, however, are not simply put into practice. Leaving one’s ethnic group may prove difficult, if not impossible, for individuals who are significantly different (e.g., in skin color or language) from the majority group—rendering the group boundaries virtually impermeable (Mummendey et al., 1999). Obtaining a promotion as a means to separate oneself from the peer group can also prove difficult in the face of discrimination and other barriers. The opposite choice—strongly identifying with one’s ethnic group, which is different from that of the host culture—may lead to the immigrant’s subjugation to even more prejudice and stereotyping (Nesdale, Rooney, & Smith, 1997). Some immigrants may feel that maintaining their ethnic identity brings on more stereotyping and discrimination by the members of the host culture. This is especially true when the migrant group differs significantly from the host
culture in language and physical traits and is concentrated in a small number of predominantly low-status job types (Ho et al., 1994), as is the case for many Mexican immigrants.

Social identity is also influenced by the social status of one’s group and identifying with what one perceives as a low-status group may have detrimental outcomes for self-esteem (Santos, Garza, & Bohon, 1994). Among Spanish speaking adolescents, for example, low self-esteem was associated with perceptions of discrimination (Portes & Zady, 2002). Therefore, the way one copes with a negative social identity, or low status, has implications for one’s self-concept. Tajfel (1981) stressed that as long as negative stereotypes about minorities predominate, “the self-image and self-respect problems of minority individuals will continue to be acute” (p. 322).

One’s self-concept may reduce one’s occupational aspirations. This phenomenon has been referred to as “leveled aspirations” (MacLeod, 1995). It was first identified among inner city youth (MacLeod, 1995) and later among minority youth as well (Constantine et al., 1998). The perception that one is at the bottom of a stratified social order, may negatively influence self-concept, and lead some individuals to accept their position and the inequalities of the social order as legitimate, perceiving their prospects for significant upward mobility as very limited. “A lower-class child growing up in an environment where success is rare, [he or she] is much less likely to develop strong ambitions than is a middle class boy or girl growing up in a social world peopled by those who have ‘made it’ and where the connection between effort and reward is taken for granted” (MacLeod, 1995, p. 15). In addition, seeing older brothers and sisters working
in menial, low-paying, and unstable jobs, having parents who are only sporadically employed, and knowing family members who have had encounters with the law, can also level the aspirations of minority youth because they lack role models to look up to (MacLeod, 1995).

Racial and ethnic minority youth "tend to have lower occupational expectations regarding their career attainment, ...[they] may perceive that they have fewer career choices and opportunities and that successful jobs will be difficult to obtain" (Constantine et al., 1998, p. 83). Similar attitudes may be leveling the aspirations of Mexican immigrants who may also identify and pursue a limited variety of possible occupational roles (Arbona, 1995). Holding leveled aspirations may also be related to degree of acculturation, as low acculturation "Asians, who are more strongly ethnically identified [namely holding a negative view of the host culture and a positive view of their own], believe occupational stereotypes to be more valid" (Leong & Serafica, 2001). Could Mexican immigrants accept the occupational stereotypes associated with their group and not aspire to obtain occupations that are higher in status? Does the lack of co-ethnic role models in higher status position limit Hispanic immigrants' ability to picture themselves in those positions?

Status

Socio-economic status has been linked to career progression because it is related to perceived career self-efficacy. Low-SES individuals were found to have lower occupational self-efficacy than high-SES individuals (Arbona, 1995). Similarly, Lauver and Jones (1991) found SES to be one of the predictors of occupational self-efficacy.
among Hispanic high school students. Furthermore, a recent study comparing low SES to high SES young adults in working class occupations found significant differences between different SES groups. High SES individuals were more likely to see work as a source of personal satisfaction. They also reported higher levels of self-concept crystallization, perceived greater access to external resources, and expressed greater levels of career adaptability (Blustein et al., 2002). Social status has also been linked so the formation of self-concept—a second important component in career theories.

Assessing Social Status

Individual status and the status differences among groups of individuals have been studied extensively in the social sciences (e.g., Berger, Roseholtz, & Zelditch, 1980; Ridgeway, 1991; Webster & Driskell, 1985). Status is often determined by professional standing (Bettencourt & Batholow, 1998) or by race, age, and gender (Webster & Driskell, 1985). These characteristics “act as cues to individuals and are used to order their interactions with persons previously unknown to them” (Webster & Driskell, 1985, p. 108). Variables that influence one’s status attainment include: father’s educational attainment and occupational status, respondent’s educational attainment, status of respondent’s first and current job (Blau & Duncan, 1994), mother’s education, number of siblings, country of birth, language competency (Spanish and English), and ethnic association (Tienda, 1982). When one examines occupational status attainment, level of aspiration (both educational and occupational) and support of significant others can also be considered (Sewell, Haller, & Portes, 1994).

According to status characteristics theory, status comes into play in social interactions as well as in the workplace because status is used as a proxy to estimate
probable task competence (Cohen & Roper, 1985). “Individuals come to be treated unequally because they are thought to have unequal task-relevant abilities” (Webster & Driskell, 1985, p. 110) based on their status group. For example, Baldi and Branch-McBrier (1997) showed that the status associated with being White or African American influenced managerial decisions regarding promotions. Namely, while Whites were evaluated based on potential, African Americans were evaluated based on experience. In this case, race was used as a proxy to estimate future success. Could similar circumstances be limiting upward mobility among Hispanic immigrants? Furthermore, having immigrated as adults and/or having worked in the U.S. illegally at first, Hispanic immigrants often have less U.S.-based work experience to be evaluated on when compared to the native born and could therefore not be considered for promotion as frequently as their native born peers.

Some researchers feel that ethnic minority status can serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy when individuals live according to the stereotypes placed upon them (Cohen & Roper, 1985). Based on the belief that role expectations shape human behavior, Moore (1985) proposed that individuals may “act in accord with externally defined role expectations...[and that these] role expectations may become incorporated as self-identities” (p. 264). A study with Hispanic students revealed a similar phenomenon. Hispanic students’ “evaluation of Anglo and Asian classmates as “smarter” when compared to themselves because of greater “natural” ability, a more persevering attitude, and greater parental demands to achieve” (Rosenholtz & Cohen, 1985, p. 431) seems to indicate such an acceptance of social stereotypes. Similar findings were also found in studies comparing African American and White students (Cohen & Roper, 1985) where
African American students perceived themselves to be less capable. Such perceptions could contribute to the formation of leveled aspirations (MacLeod, 1995) and limited upward mobility among Mexican immigrants.

Because Mexican immigrants "usually end up in dead-end, low-paying service jobs—cleaning offices [or] mowing lawns" (Suro, 1992, p. 1) many score low on the variables used to define social status, holding a lower status in American society when compared to Anglo-Americans. This seems to trap Mexican immigrants in a cycle, restraining them to low status positions. Holding low occupational status (in low- and semi-skilled jobs) and having lower educational attainment when compared to White Americans, Mexican immigrants experience limited upward mobility. "Compared to Anglos, Mexican origin men and women are not only more concentrated in low status occupations, but their mobility patterns are much more restricted" (Tienda, 1982, p. 442), which challenges some in preserving their sense of dignity (Suro, 1992).

A study conducted with Anglo- and Mexican American college students in California indicated that both ethnic groups viewed Anglo-Americans as having higher status and power when compared to Mexican Americans (Santos, Garza, & Bohon, 1994, p. 442). According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) high-status groups strive to maintain their status and tend to discriminate against the low status group. Phenotypic discrimination—one form of status preserving discrimination of the high status group—has been studied extensively with African Americans but it also relates to Hispanics. Espino and Franz (2002) found that "darker-skinned Mexicans...face significantly lower occupational prestige scores than their lighter-skinned counterparts even when controlling for factors that influence performance in the labor market" (p.
Similarly, in an experiment with Anglo and Hispanic high school students, Rosenholtz and Cohen (1985) found that having a “Spanish surname was not sufficient to activate the [low] status characteristic of ethnicity unless the Hispanic student resembled the ethnic stereotype” (p. 441).

Having low social status can lead to a negative self-image because the social groups one identifies with shape one’s self-concept (Bettencourt, Charlton, Dorr, & Humna, 2001). “People’s self-concept...consists not only of their unique personal identities but of their social identities as well” (Oldmeadow, Platow, Foddy, & Anderson, 2003, p. 140). In addition, low social status can act as a uniting force for the low-status group because “minority group status makes in-group membership more salient than does membership in a majority group, resulting in a heightened level of ethnocentrism in low status group members” (Santos, Garza & Bohon, 1994, p. 454). Because people strive towards a positive self-concept, they are likely to—as part of the in-group identification process—positively evaluate their own social groups. This may sometimes lead to bias against out-group members (Bettencourt et al., 2001). In the case of a low-status minority immigrant group, this process may lead to further separation from the majority high-status group and its culture. Thus, the minority group’s low-status is perpetuated internally and externally.

**Status Perpetuation**

Occupational and social status can be self-perpetuating because both are associated with numerous factors that make it difficult for individuals to modify their status. Social status
is usually associated with a certain level of income, education, family structure, community reputation, and so forth. These become part of a vicious cycle in which each factor acts on the other. [preserving] the social structure in its present form. The cumulation of disadvantages affects the individual's entry into the labor market as well as his later opportunities for social mobility (Blau & Duncan, 1991, p. 325).

Tienda (1982) found that Mexican workers “are extremely under-represented in the upper white collar occupations and over-represented in the blue collar occupations” (p. 448). When examining within-group differences, Tienda (1982) found that, while equal in status when taking their first job, Mexican men experience relatively more upward movement in the status hierarchy once they reach the mid-life of their career compared to Mexican women. However, compared to the Anglo-American population they remain in low status. Finally, Tienda (1982) predicted that because of “the persistent effects of birthplace on occupational status... immigrants from Mexico will be permanently hampered in their attainment of high status positions in the U.S.” (Tienda, 1982, p. 464).

Ethnic identity can also play a role in status perpetuation. This occurs when the desire to maintain affiliation and identification with one's ethnic group leads the individual to shun behaviors that may be identified with the majority. If social identities provide a frame of reference for the appropriate attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions one should hold, then individuals who are strongly identified with their group would want to
follow what is considered appropriate among their peers (Oldmeadow et al., 2003).

Indeed,

Writing in the fields of anthropology and education, suggested that in reaction to
discrimination and oppression...and in an effort to maintain a positive sense of
self, many ethnic group members develop a cultural identity in which the
behaviors, events, symbols, and even meaning that are viewed as characteristics
of the oppressors (i.e., European Americans) are considered inappropriate for
[ethnic group members] and are therefore rejected (Leong & Brown, 1995, p.
153).

Therefore, if pursuing upward mobility into higher status positions, managerial or other,
is perceived as driven by North American values, it may be seen as inappropriate
behavior for Hispanics. In addition, as mentioned earlier, low-status groups often
become more cohesive because of unfavorable interactions with high-status groups.
Therefore, if one belongs to a low-status group and identifies strongly with group
members, one is more likely to follow the attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of the group.
These attitudes, beliefs and perceptions can be culturally bound. Therefore, if certain
behaviors are not valued by the in-group the individual may choose not to engage in
those behaviors. For example, if upward mobility at work is seen “as a White
characteristic, [it] consequently [becomes] one that persons of color ought to avoid if they
want to remain consistent with their identity” (Trueba, 2002, p. 19).

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Research Questions

Based on the gaps identified in the career literature in terms of explaining the limited career progression among Hispanic immigrants in the United States, many unanswered questions remain which form the basis for my research questions. Given the exploratory nature of this study and, traditional, testable hypotheses were not formulated. Research questions were proposed instead, to serve as general guidelines. The research questions were:

- What are Mexican immigrant employees’ feelings about work and how do these feelings influence desires for upward mobility in the workplace?
- What are some of the barriers and/or motivations to pursue upward mobility for Mexican immigrant employees? What forms of capital influence desire and pursuit of upward mobility?
- What job characteristics are considered desirable by Mexican immigrants and how does this influence desires for job change?
- How do interpersonal relationships at work with co-ethnic and non-co-ethnic peers and with co-ethnic and non-co-ethnic supervisors and/or managers influence the desire for upward mobility?
- To what extent do cultural values influence desire for upward mobility among Mexican immigrants?
- What role do social and ethnic identities play in influencing Mexican immigrants’ desire for upward mobility?
- To what extent does stress limit the desire for and pursuit of upward mobility among Mexican immigrants?
Summary

The challenges immigrants face when coming to the U.S. are clearly complex and have far reaching implications in terms of their work lives and career progression. The desire to better understand the different variables involved in career progression of Hispanic immigrants provided the motivation to conduct this study. This chapter examined some of the existing literature that is relevant to upward mobility among immigrant employees. The deficiency and/or partial applicability of the existing career theories regarding career progression of immigrant employees was exposed. Other issues potentially relevant to the lives of Hispanic immigrants were also presented. Individual variables such as the drivers for immigration among people of Hispanic origin—as well as their integration process into American society—were explored and related to career progression questions. Hispanic cultural values were presented and contrasted with North American cultural values. In addition, their relevance to work values and desires for achieving upward mobility was also discussed. Finally, other factors inherent to the environment in which Hispanic immigrants live were mentioned. These include the social context and how it influences identity (social and ethnic identity) as well as the importance of social status in the formation of perceptions of self. The possible impact of these individual and environmental variables on individual self-concept and career aspirations were also discussed.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This study was exploratory in nature, because little is known about the career progression of Hispanic immigrant employees (Arbona, 1995). When investigating understudied populations an exploratory approach has been cited as the most suitable (Arbona, 1995; Gomez et al., 2001; Hackett, 1997). Furthermore, a recent trend in career progression studies shows a distancing from the positivist approach in terms of the research methods used (e.g., Bullington & Arbona, 2001; Gomez et al., 2001; Hernandez, 1995; Richie et al., 1997; Rivera, Anderson, & Middleton, 1999; Vondracek & Kawasaki, 1995). Under the positivist paradigm, the researcher chooses to examine predetermined topics he or she deems important, in a survey or structured interview format (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). In this study, I wanted to allow for interviewee input as to the important issues to be studied—something a positivist approach would not have accommodated. For this reason, I selected a method that would allow for interviewees’ opinions and feelings to be heard. I felt that this approach would grant me a better understanding of how Hispanic immigrants perceive experiences at work and think about upward mobility. The qualitative method of semi-structured interviews was selected for three main reasons.
First, it was deemed most appropriate for investigating the research questions at hand. Second, due to Hispanic immigrants’ often limited levels of English proficiency and relatively low levels of literacy and education overall—not only in English but in Spanish as well—survey based research may prove difficult to execute with the Hispanic immigrant population. Third, this population is unaccustomed to survey research and coming from a relationship-oriented culture, Hispanic individuals are more likely to respond favorably to personal interviews (in their native language) than impersonal pen-and-paper surveys.

My personal ontological and epistemological beliefs also guided my methodological approach. Ontology refers to what we identify as knowledge. It deals with the actual state of reality rather than the human understanding of what true reality may be—its objectivity (Lundberg & Young, n.d.). My ontological belief is that reality is relative and situation-dependent, rather than universal. I feel that social, political, and economic variables as well as ethnicity and gender shape individual realities. My ontological assumption, that reality is a social construction and a product of human imagination, falls within the anti-positivist paradigm, as I take a subjective, nominalist approach, which sees truth as subjective and context-specific. In my research, I seek to give a voice to others, taking an emic (insider) perspective, rather than hearing only the White male point of view, as has been the case in traditional organizational research. Accordingly, my epistemological stance is one that allows me to understand how social reality is created. Epistemology is the study of the methods and grounds of knowledge especially with reference to its limits and validity. It focuses on knowledge—what a human community has learned—rather than truth (Lundberg & Young, n.d.). This means
that, when doing research, we are not searching for the ‘one’ truth but rather propose new knowledge within a specific context, which can then be re-tested and confirmed or disconfirmed.

Research Design

This research has employed a qualitative approach, which is particularly suited for studies attempting to achieve the following research purposes identified by Maxwell (1996):

1. Understanding what meaning study participants give to their lives and experiences. In this study I attempted to develop an understanding of the experiences of Mexican immigrant workers in the Las Vegas hospitality industry. This includes their experience interacting with peers and managers at work or their experiences when pursuing a promotion, for example, and how these experiences influence feelings about the self. By identifying the participants’ perspective, I was able to understand their reality. For example, when communication in the work place is perceived as being limited to task-specific information exchange or disciplinary action only, some individuals interpreted this as management’s indifference or discrimination. Such perceptions may in turn shape personal attitudes towards one’s work and the people one works with.

2. Understanding a particular context in which participants act and its influence on their actions. In this study I attempted to understand how the work experiences of Mexican immigrant workers in the Las Vegas hospitality
industry influence their attitude towards upward mobility. For example, when an employee holds a low status job and perceives limited options for upward mobility because there are no other co-ethnic individuals in higher status positions, this individual may feel discouraged from pursuing upward mobility.

3. Understanding the process through which events and actions take place. In this study, I attempted to provide explanations for the circumstances that trap Hispanic immigrant workers in low status positions. For example, I examined the process through which failure and discrimination may lead to perceived powerlessness and helplessness, which, in turn, limit aspiration to improve one’s occupational status.

4. Developing causal explanations. In this study I attempted to identify what factors in the workplace, or interactions among people in the workplace, lead to specific attitudes and/or outcomes for Hispanic immigrant workers. For example, the expectations of an employee’s manager may influence the behaviors of that employee in terms of believing in his or her abilities and chances to improve occupational status.

Reliability and Validity

The debate among qualitative and quantitative researchers often focuses around the assumed lack of rigor in qualitative studies (Crang, 2002; Douglas, 2003; Rubin, 2000). However, qualitative work can be held to similar standards of “good and convincing research” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 85) as quantitative studies are, namely those of validity and reliability. The standards of “good science” (Strauss & Corbin,
are retained in a modified version to fit the "realities of qualitative research and the complexities of social phenomena" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 250). As stated by Lee (1999), "any study's conceptualizations, measurement process, and interpretations should be chosen carefully and systematically, and should be representative of the phenomena of interest" (p. 146). Simply stated, "if research is valid, it closely reflects the world being described. If work is reliable, two researchers studying the same arena will come up with compatible observations" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 85).

Reliability

Reliability is the consistency and stability of the results obtained in a certain measurement process (Lee, 1999). Consistency means repeatability—that a certain study, when replicated, would produce similar results. Stability means that the results would be consistent over time (Lee, 1999). Marshall and Rossman (1995) argue that qualitative studies, by their nature, cannot be fully replicated because the world changes. However, in an effort to preserve reliability they propose that researchers keep "thorough notes and a journal or log that records each design decision and the rationale behind it [so as] to allow others to inspect their procedures, protocols and decisions" (p. 146). They further suggest that researchers keep "all collected data in a well-organized, retrievable form, [so as] to make them available easily if the findings are challenged or if any other researcher wants to reanalyze the data" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 146).

Rubin and Rubin (1995) second this recommendation, referring to it as the principle of transparency. "Transparency means that a reader of a qualitative research report is able to see the basic processes of data collection" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 85). This can be achieved by keeping detailed records describing how one goes about
conducting the research. Notes can include comments regarding observations of participant behaviors during an interview (such as humor or nervousness) and general observations (such as participant friendliness or anxiety). Notes should also be kept on why certain decisions were made during the research, "such as determining to follow a particular theme or explore a specific concept" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 86). These analytic memos serve as a way to keep track of one's analysis and interpretation that guide the research. In order to enhance reliability, Spradley (1979) suggests keeping a running record of analytic memos as one of four separate sets of notes. The other three are: short notes made at the time of the interview, expanded notes made within 24 hours of the interview, and a fieldwork journal to document problems, ideas, and emotions that arise during each stage of the fieldwork.

I followed Marshall and Rossman's (1995) and Rubin and Rubin's (1995) recommendations and kept a log detailing the rationale behind specific interview questions. I also kept all interview tapes and interview transcript records in an organized and readily available format. Each interview's transcription, notes sheet (notes taken during the interview), tape, and consent form were filed in labeled envelopes—one envelope per interview, including the date, time, and location of the interview. Keeping the data organized enhances the repeatability of the study, which is one of the recommendations for soundness discussed above. I used only the initials of informants' names and did not include their place of employment in the record, even when they shared it with me, in order to preserve confidentiality. Two copies were made of each transcription, one for coding and one for back up purposes. A computer diskette with the interview transcription was also kept in case additional copies would be needed.
In addition, I followed Marshall and Rossman’s (1995) recommendations of: (1) having a research partner who played ‘devil’s advocate’, critically questioning my analysis; (2) constantly checking for negative instances; and (3) purposefully rechecking for possibly rival hypothesis. This is in line with Rubin and Rubin’s (1995) consistency principle which requires researchers to check out “ideas and responses that appear to be inconsistent” (p. 87), including coherence of themes—and examining contradictions among different themes, and coherence in individuals—examining contradictions in what individuals say. When an interviewee stated something that seemed conflictive, I asked him or her to clarify these thoughts. I did so carefully, so as not to offend the interviewee or make him or her feel as through I questioned his or her judgement.

For example, ST, a male fry cook, spoke of doing tasks that were part of a saucier’s position, which is a higher level position in the kitchen. ST explained that he enjoyed the challenge of doing the new tasks and felt that he was helping his supervisors by doing them. When ST later stated that he did not desire the position of saucier, and that he did not want to sign the papers that would transfer him to this position, I perceived a conflict in what he said. Namely, the fact that he stated he enjoyed the work but did not want the position. I proceeded by probing further into the reasons behind ST’s decision to not formally assume the position of saucier even though he was doing the tasks related to the position on a daily basis and enjoying them. I asked: “What is it about the saucier position that you don’t like?” ST responded that he liked everything about the position. I further probed, asking: “What would be different if you had this position versus the one you have now?” This was when ST spoke of the root cause of his decision, namely the burden associated with the additional responsibility of a saucier position, a responsibility
which, as a fry cook, he did not have. He said: “Diferente, pues, si algo sale mal, se van
derechito a la persona: “tu hiciste esto mal!” Ya tiene el, ya tienes la posicion y tienes que
ser responsable”. [Different in that if something comes out badly, they go straight to the
person: “you did this wrong!” You already have the position and you need to be
responsible].

Validity

Validity “at an operational level...derives from the evidence that discounts
alternative explanations of the researcher’s inferences. The more alternatives that can be
eliminated as implausible, the stronger the inference for validity” (Lee, 1999, p. 166).
Maxwell (1996) discusses three types of validity: description, interpretation, and theory.
Valid description is one that provides high levels of accuracy of reporting in the data:
what the researcher heard, saw, and experienced in the field. It can be enhanced through
audio taping interviews, transcribing them verbatim, and providing detailed descriptions
of the data.

Valid interpretation is one that offers accuracy of description between what the
participants meant and what the researcher inferred. This can be achieved by minimizing
leading questions, paying close attention to participants’ words, and allowing participants
to use their own words (rather than researcher-imposed terminology). The semi-
structured interview protocol that was used in this study allowed participants to use their
own words and focus on the themes they perceived as most important, placing the focus
on them, rather than on the researcher’s preconceived notions and/or biases. At the
conclusion of each interview, the interviewee was asked whether he or she wanted to add
anything regarding the subjects that were discussed. Interviewees were also asked
whether they wanted to add anything else which they considered important regarding the lives of Mexican immigrants living and working in the United States.

Finally, valid theory is produced when the researcher makes every effort to discount alternative explanations of his or her findings. In addition, valid theory is more likely to emerge when one enters a study with minimal preconceived ideas and/or personal biases. I held some ideas, based on the available literature, regarding the importance of cultural values in the lives of Hispanic immigrants. The fact, however, that I did not find any support for the influence of all the cultural variables identified in the literature, increased my confidence in not having been biased by these ideas. Furthermore, while discrimination may frequently be seen as the primary barrier to upward mobility, I specifically did not bring up the term nor ask if interviewees felt they were being discriminated against or treated poorly for being Mexican. I simply asked interviewees to describe interpersonal relationships with peers, supervisors, and/or managers so as to allow them to identify the character of those relationships rather than place the focus on discrimination.

Maxwell (1996) suggests several tactics to minimize threats to validity. In this research I followed five of his recommendations:

1. I tested as many alternative explanations as possible. For example, I tried to account for all the antecedents I was able to identify in the literature for the desire for upward mobility as well as possible moderators of the relationship between the desire for and actual pursuit of upward mobility. This obviously excludes some explanations I have failed to identify which is one of the limitations of my
study to be discussed in Chapter Seven. In addition, when questions remained unclear I pursued them in subsequent interviews.

2. I proactively examined discrepant cases, further pursuing discrepant ideas in subsequent interviews. For example, some individuals reported poor relationships with co-ethnic managers compared to White Anglo managers, while others reported the exact opposite—expressing a preference for working with co-ethnic managers. I made it a point to identify the ethnicity of the interviewee’s manager when relationships with management were discussed. In addition, when appropriate, I asked comparative questions, such as: “Have you had a Hispanic supervisor in the past? How was the relationship with this individual? Do you have a preference for working with a Hispanic manager or an Anglo manager?”

3. I asked for feedback from an external and neutral third party so as to keep myself ‘honest’. I periodically met with the chair of my dissertation committee to discuss my interpretation of the interviews and examine possible new avenues to be examined.

4. I produced verbatim transcriptions of all interviews, transcribing all interviews myself, in Spanish when necessary. This allowed me to stay close to the phenomena of study.

5. I compared results to other studies in order “to enhance confidence in converging empirical results” (Lee, 1999, p. 168). These comparisons will be apparent throughout Chapters Four and Five in which my findings are presented.
Research Questions

Explicit research hypotheses are usually not offered in qualitative research. Rather, qualitative researchers "state their ideas about what is going on as part of the process of theorizing and data analysis. These are often called *propositions* rather than hypotheses" (Maxwell, 1996, p. 53). The main distinction of propositions in qualitative research is that "they are generally formulated *after* the researcher has begun the study; they are grounded in the data and are developed and tested in interaction with it, rather than being prior ideas that are simply tested against data" (Maxwell, 1996, p. 53).

Traditional hypotheses could introduce bias into the researcher's approach, contaminating his or her openness to hearing what respondents are saying. A researcher might end up searching for specific answers to prove or disprove pre-stated hypotheses rather than being sensitive to *all* the information he or she is collecting. The research questions posed in this study were presented in Chapters One and Two.

In order to answer my research questions, I developed a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix A). Semi-structured interviews are interviews in which the "interviewer introduces the topic, then guides the discussion by asking specific questions" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 5). This type of interview will usually have an equal amount of both more structured and less structured parts in it (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The interviewer typically does not seek an 'agree' or 'disagree' answer but rather seeks to hear what the interviewee is thinking. Using semi-structured interviews has allowed me to gain insight into some of the feelings and opinions directing Hispanic immigrants' behaviors and attitudes at work. Table 4 provides a detailed explanation of the relationship between the research questions and the interview protocol—namely how
the research questions were operationalized. I selected interview questions that would encourage interviewees to speak about their work life experiences and at the same time reveal some of their thought processes and/or feelings.

Table 4 includes all the interview questions asked, however, not every question was asked in every single interview. During semi-structured interviews, the interviewer often uses probes based on the interviewee's statements, which may sometimes lead the conversation in different directions. In a way, each interview is customized to the interviewee. As stated by Rubin and Rubin (1995) "the flow and choice of topics [of a qualitative interview] changes to match what the individual interviewee knows and feels" (p. 6). For example, the question regarding social identity ("Who do you see as similar to you, who do you identify with?") was asked only during a few interviewees because, when issues of ethnic identity emerged naturally, this question was deemed unnecessary. Other changes and additions made to the interview protocol are discussed below.
Table 4: Research Questions and Interview Protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question/s</th>
<th>Corresponding Interview Question/s</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Opening &quot;warm up&quot; questions</td>
<td>1. Tell me about your work. What do you do? What do you usually do on a typical day? Describe it please.</td>
<td>To encourage interviewee to begin talking openly about things he/she feels comfortable with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ What are Mexican immigrant employees' feelings about work and how do these feelings influence desires for upward mobility at work?</td>
<td>2. What are some things you like about your job? What are some things you dislike about your job?</td>
<td>To assess how an individual feels about his/her job. Does the individual like/dislike his/her job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Would you want to do a different kind of job? Do you sometimes think of doing a different kind of job? Did you ever act on this desire?</td>
<td>To examine whether the individual desires to pursue upward mobility into another line position. To determine if the desire exists and if action has been taken or is being planned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What happened when you acted on this desire?</td>
<td>To find out how individual deals with rejection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(a) How would your work-life be different (better or worse) if you had a different position?</td>
<td>Examine why an individual desired (or did not desire) to pursue upward mobility without having to ask &quot;Why?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) What would you need to do in order to be promoted to a different position?</td>
<td>Examine perceived discrimination—whether interviewee perceived that opportunities were equally available or that special “pull” was necessary for obtaining a promotion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ What are some of the barriers and/or motivations to upward mobility for Mexican immigrant employees (other line position)?</td>
<td>4. Would you want to be a supervisor or manager? What would you need to do in order to be promoted to become a supervisor or manager?</td>
<td>To examine whether the individual desires to pursue upward mobility into a supervisory/managerial position. To determine if the desire exists and if action has been taken or is being planned.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What job characteristics are considered desirable by Mexican immigrants and how does this influence desires for job change?

How do interpersonal relationships at work with co-ethnic and non-co-ethnic peers and with co-ethnic and non-co-ethnic supervisors and/or managers influence the desire for upward mobility?

To what extent do cultural values influence desire for upward mobility among Mexican immigrants?

(a) How would your work-life be different (better or worse) if you were a supervisor or manager?

(b) What would you need to do in order to be promoted to become a supervisor or manager?

What do you look for in a job? What characteristics make a job desirable?

Tell me about the people you work with. How do you like the people you work with?

Do you get along with peers and supervisors and/or managers?

Can you give me some examples for how working in Las Vegas is better/worse than working in another U.S. city?

What would you tell a family member from a different city in the U.S., about working in Las Vegas?

Examine why an individual desired (or did not desire) to become a manager without having to ask "Why?"

Examine perceived discrimination—whether interviewee perceived that opportunities were equally available or that special "pull" was necessary for obtaining a promotion.

To identify job characteristics that may encourage a job change versus those that will make it undesirable.

To identify what aspects of work are important to the individual.

To determine the ethnic composition of the workforce (peers and supervisors).

To assess the quality of interpersonal relationship—identify inter-ethnic conflict or perceived discrimination without having to ask about it specifically.

To determine importance placed on interpersonal relationships.

Questions 7 through 9 were intended to identify whether cultural values influence the importance placed on certain job characteristics.

This was done by contrasting between different places of employment (as in questions 7 through 9).
To what extent does stress limit the desire for and pursuit of upward mobility among Mexican immigrants?

What role do social and ethnic identities play in influencing Mexican immigrants' desire for upward mobility?

10. What differences have you found between work in the U.S. and Mexico? Where would you rather work, in the United States or Mexico?

11. What do you think your employer is looking for or expects from his or her employees? What do you think your supervisor/manager expects from you?

12. How does it feel to be a Latino/a working in a hotel in Las Vegas?

13. Who do you see as similar to you, who do you identify with?

14. If I were to ask you to describe yourself, what would you tell me?

15. Assuming I wanted to know who you are, what information would I need to be able to describe you? Choose three words to describe yourself.

To examine whether the individual perceives more stress when living in the U.S. without having to ask "Is your life more stressful in the U.S. compared to Mexico?"

To examine whether the individual perceives organizational support for upward mobility.

To examine ethnic identity issues.

To examine social identity and ethnic identity. Affiliation with or desire to distance one self from one's ethnic group. To examine what is most valued by the individual (work or family for example) To examine social identity and ethnic identity. Affiliation with or desire to distance one self from one's ethnic group.
Interview Protocol Development

I conducted a practice interview to test my data collection and analysis methods. This 90-minute interview assisted me in revising the questions I selected to use in the interview protocol. Based on this interview, I decided to ask more detailed questions at first, questions that could be answered with short responses. This allowed some time for the interviewee to “warm up” to me and speak more freely. About 10-15 minutes into this practice interview, my interviewee began sharing stories with me on his own accord, without too much probing. I therefore felt that I would need to do more probing in the beginning of each interview. When the interviewee’s wife asked me where I was from and why I was interested in Latinos, I realized the potential benefit of sharing my immigrant status and background with interviewees so as to increase trust. Subsequent interviews were opened by stating, among other things, my own immigrant status and country of origin.

In addition, one of my questions was intended to address social identity. By asking “If I were to ask you to describe yourself, what would you tell me? Assuming I want to know who you are, what information do I need?”, I hoped interviewees would speak about what was important to them such as their identity as a family man/woman or their identity as an employee, for example. However, this interviewee mentioned personal characteristics he felt were descriptive of his character such as responsible and conscientious. Upon reflection, I decided that in following interviews, I would ask the question differently. In order to get at the social groups the interviewee identified with I decided to ask: “Who do you see as similar to you? Who do you identify with?”
In addition, when asking: “If a family member from Mexico wanted to come to Las Vegas to work in a hotel, what would you tell him or her? What advice would you give her or him?”, I intended to gain information on the character of the immigrant’s work experience. Namely, I wanted to know if he or she was being treated well, was satisfied at work, and satisfied with his or her achievements. This question, however, failed to yield the intended outcome because the difference between Mexico and the U.S. in terms of work opportunities is so enormous. I therefore decided to simply ask: “What are some things you like about your job? What are some things you dislike about your job? What do you look for in a job? What makes a job desirable?” When I asked a comparative question, it was phrased differently: “Can you give me some examples for how working in Las Vegas is better or worse than working in another U.S. city?” or “If a family member from a different city in the U.S., would you recommend he/she come to Las Vegas?”

Gaining Access

Three local hotels in the Las Vegas metropolitan area were approached through personal contacts to gain access to interview foreign-born Hispanic employees. While negotiations reached various stages, ultimately, all three properties declined participation. The leader of a local church, which supports immigrants through the different stages of the citizenship process, agreed to provide a list of Mexican immigrant workers who were union members (and therefore worked at one of the major casino-hotels in town). The list included 80 Mexican immigrant employees. Every individual on this list was called and invited to participate in the study. Of the 80 individuals contacted, 24 were
unreachable after a minimum of three and a maximum of ten attempts on different days and times. Twenty-one expressed some interest in participating but were unable to commit at the time they were contacted due to other work and/or family obligations, and 14 declined. Twenty-one individuals agreed to participate and scheduled an appointment. However, four of them were not at home during the scheduled time or did not come to the specified meeting place (no-shows), and I was unable to re-schedule with them (two of these individuals were repeated no-shows). In addition, I scheduled four follow-up interviews but was able to conduct only two as two interviewees were not home at the time the follow up interview was scheduled. The final sample included a total of nineteen interviews with seventeen different individuals (two individuals were interviewed twice).

I began every phone contact by introducing myself by my first name, and stating that I was calling from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. I explained how I obtained the individual’s name and phone number and mentioned that I was conducting a study of the work-life experiences of Mexican immigrants working in the Las Vegas hospitality industry. Identifying myself over the phone as being a student—unaffiliated with employers and working on a school project—facilitated the gaining of access. Once individuals expressed willingness to participate, I provided more information regarding the questions I would be asking, stating they would be about interpersonal relationships with peers and managers at work as well as feelings and opinions about work. When individuals wanted more information, I explained in detail why I chose to study Mexicans. I explained that it was important to learn more about Mexican immigrants because they have grown in size and importance in the United States. I also stressed confidentiality
and explained that individuals would not have to disclose the name of their employer or
the name of their supervisor and/or manager at any time. I emphasized that the only
work-related information asked would include their position (type of job) and tenure. I
repeated that I was interested in only their opinions and attitudes and did not need to
know where they worked. Based on my experience in two prior studies (Shinnar &
Young, 2004; Young, 2004), Hispanic individuals are usually willing and even glad to
participate in studies that give them an opportunity to share their experiences coming to,
and living in, the United States. Marin and Marín (1991) also noted that Hispanics tend
to cooperate in research projects that promise some positive social outcomes. This was
also the case in this study: only 20% declined (which includes individuals who declined
and the no-shows), and all but one agreed to be tape-recorded. All interviews were
conducted at the participants’ homes, except for two interviews, which were conducted
on campus according to the participants’ preference.

Marin and Marín (1991) stress the importance of building trust and establishing a
positive relationship with interviewees. Based on the Hispanic cultural value of *simpatia*,
they recommend that a researcher engage in some “small talk” before and after the
interview so as to facilitate the respondent’s satisfaction and cooperation. Being fluent in
Spanish served as an initial way of coming closer to my interviewees, and allowed me to
establish some trust with them. I always dressed casually, in khaki pants and a simple
shirt or sweater, so as to look like a typical student and be as non-threatening as possible.
I did not mention I was in graduate school, so as to minimize the status differential, but
simply explained that this was a project I chose to complete as part of my degree
assignment. In addition, I described the questions that would be asked during the
interview and repeatedly stressed confidentiality. Finally, I began every encounter by introducing myself as a college student from Israel, mentioning that I was an immigrant myself.

I felt that introducing myself as an immigrant, and stressing the fact I was not American, was important for the following reasons. First, I had the impression that, once interviewees heard I was an immigrant, they felt more comfortable with me. I sensed that it would be important to point out my immigrant status because, although fluent in Spanish, I am not of Hispanic origin. This may have led some interviewees to identify me as more similar to Anglos than to Hispanics and possibly feel threatened. Past research has shown that when interviewers differ in their physical or social characteristics from the interviewees, some bias may be introduced into responses, which may have an effect on the quality of data received. For example, Bailey (1994) found interviewer ethnicity to affect the responses of Mexican-American study participants on questions regarding education and income. Namely, when interviewed by an Anglo, these individuals reported higher educational attainment and family income than when interviewed by a co-ethnic individual. However, stating I was not of Hispanic origin could also have been important, as evidence suggests that interviewing across ethnic origin can actually be more effective than when the interviewer and interviewee have matching backgrounds. For example, in conversations between Chicana women and Anglo interviewers and Chicana women and Chicana interviewers, Chicana women spoke more, and more freely, when interviewed by Anglo women about sensitive topics including discrimination (Tixier & Elsasser, 1978).
The importance of the interaction between the researcher and the participants in qualitative research cannot be stressed enough. Therefore, "the researcher's empathy, sensitivity, humor and sincerity are important tools for the research" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 12). My interest in Hispanic immigrants' life experiences, which grew as a result of previous research project and a true love of Latin music and culture, made interaction with research participants enjoyable and thus empathy, sincerity and sincerity came effortlessly. In addition, I made sure to establish some degree of rapport before beginning the actual interview. For example, I thanked every interviewee for his or her time, not only after but also before the interview, to show my appreciation for his or her participation. Also, when other people were present in the home, I introduced myself to them as well, making eye contact and smiling. Often children were present and curious about my presence, which I acknowledged, saying hello to them as well. In addition, when the phone rang during an interview or something else required the attention of the interviewee, I always offered to take a break and turn the tape recorder off, so as to intrude as little as possible in the interviewee's day. Each interviewee was informed, prior to the formal beginning of the interview, that he or she could ask for the tape recorder to be turned off at any time. I offered to answer any questions before starting and always explained that I would be asking some personal demographic questions first and would then go into the actual interview.

I always felt welcome and respected when entering respondents' homes. On several occasions, I was able to interact on a friendly level with my interviewees and their family members who were present, beyond the interview itself. For example, on one occasion, I arrived at an interviewee's house and his wife answered the door. The
interviewee had forgotten about our meeting and was still in his pajamas. While I waited for him to change, his wife invited me to sit in the dining room to wait. The door between the dining room and the kitchen (where the wife was cooking) was open. I began talking to the wife and the pre-school age daughter who was also there. The child warmed up to me after a few moments. Coming to sit by my side, she started looking through my bag. Her father arrived at that moment and gently scolded her. I said it was no problem, laughing it off, and gave the girl some colored highlighters I had in my bag. She remained seated at the dining room table on her father's lap during part of the interview. When the interview was concluded I thanked the interviewee and his wife and said good bye to the little girl. She started crying when I was at the door, reaching her hands out to me. I smiled at her and I said I had to go, waving good bye.

Introducing the consent form was done with special care because individuals may be apprehensive about signing a document presented by a stranger. I explained that because I was a student of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, I had to follow all the regulations of the university. I mentioned that the university wanted to make sure that all the students who conduct research in the community would do so respectfully and in a proper manner. For this reason the university asks that students inform each participant exactly what is asked of him or her. I pointed out that this would be accomplished through the consent form, which explained exactly what the study was about and what I asked of each participant. The consent form was available in English and Spanish, and every interviewee was offered a signed copy for him or her to keep. The consent form was helpful in introducing the fact that the interview would be tape-recorded. However, even though it was mentioned in the consent form, I asked for permission to tape record
before turning on the recorder and always explained that it could be turned off at any time.
Having the consent form with the UNLV logo at the top of the sheet, and handing out a
University business card, also helped me to legitimize my endeavor and establish the
credibility of my study and me.

Sampling
Mexican immigrant hospitality employees were not selected as a representative
sample of all immigrant workers. This sample may be regarded as a convenience sample
because of the way in which access was gained. However, the Hispanics employed in the
hospitality industry in the Las Vegas metropolitan area are representative of Hispanics in
general because they fill predominantly low- and semi-skilled positions in a service
industry (Cervantes, 1992). The obtained sample allowed me to interview a diverse
group of individuals: men, women, and workers in different positions and departments.
Workers of differing work tenures and individuals living in the U.S. for different periods
of time were represented as well. I felt it was important to have a diverse group of
interviewees because demographic variables may influence attitudes. For example,
gender may influence desire for upward mobility as women may have different priorities
than men do regarding the importance of work in their lives overall. This can be
especially pronounced in the Hispanic culture, which places an emphasis on gender roles
(Hofstede, 2001). In addition, variables such as work tenure may influence an
individual’s promotability based on accrued seniority and experience. This is also true
for tenure in the U.S., which may enhance English skills and, in turn, influence
promotability.
Population of Interest

This study focused on Hispanic immigrants in Nevada, more specifically, Mexican immigrant employees in the Las Vegas hospitality industry. This group is in many ways representative of a larger Hispanic population for three main reasons. First, approximately 44% of the Hispanics living in the U.S. reside in the West (Therrien & Ramirez, 2000). Las Vegas, the largest city in Nevada, is among the new Latino destinations of hyper-growth (growth that exceeds 300% in the years between 1980 and 2000). The city is the fastest growing metro in the nation, growing by 200% between 1980 and 2000. Las Vegas' Hispanic population grew by 750 percent during those twenty years (Suro, 2002). Las Vegas, located in the Western United States, represents one of the cities in the region in which most Hispanics living in the U.S. reside.

Second, approximately 394,000 individuals of Hispanic origin live in Nevada, comprising about 20% of the population (Guzmán, 2001), the majority of whom (72%) are of Mexican descent. For this reason studying the Mexican population could offer knowledge about the largest group among Hispanic immigrants. Another reason to focus on this specific subgroup of the Hispanic population lies in within-group variations. When doing research on Hispanics in the U.S., it is important to recognize that this population is not entirely homogeneous. One should be careful not to group together two individuals merely because they are of Hispanic origin. For example a descendant of Spanish settlers, living in New Mexico, who no longer speaks Spanish should not be considered the same as an undocumented Nicaraguan who has just arrived in the U.S. (Marin & Marín, 1991). The cultural differences among the Hispanic subgroups (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, etc.) due to differences in immigration backgrounds and
socioeconomic status, are significant enough to justify segmenting this population and studying Mexican immigrants only (Arbona, 1995; Cresce, 1992; Marin & Marin, 1991; Porter & Washington, 1993; Portes, 1989; Reimers, 1992). “Because the differences between Hispanics overall and groups are often greater than the differences between Hispanics overall and Blacks and Whites, statistics on Hispanics in the aggregate tend to obscure more than they reveal” (Reimers, 1992, p. 30). Therefore, Reimers (1992) recommends to consider Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans and Central and South Americans separately whenever possible.

Third, as Hispanics grow in number, their size and importance in the labor force grows as well. The 2002 Census figures showed Hispanics comprised 15.4% of the labor force in Nevada (Census, 2002). These figures are predicted to increase even further in future years. Many organizations in Nevada will draw from a labor pool of an increasing number of immigrant workers. This includes employers within the service industry—one of the three sectors boasting the fastest growth in number of jobs since the mid-1990s (Judy & D’Amico, 1997). Given that the hospitality industry, which falls in the service sector, is the largest employer in Las Vegas, studying employees in this industry could offer significant insight into a larger population. The hospitality industry also employs high numbers of immigrant workers, including Hispanics. This is apparent from the high numbers of immigrants in the ranks of the city’s Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union, representing approximately 45,000 of the city’s hotel workers (Waddoups, 2002). This is likely to continue given that “there is a shrinking pool of available labor for low-level, labor-intensive jobs” (Rose, 1997) and because these types of jobs (low- to semi-skilled) have been on the rise in the U.S. since the mid...
90s (Judy & D’Amico, 1997). Increasing numbers of immigrant workers fill these low- and semi-skilled positions. Many of these immigrants are Hispanic who, when compared to White and Black Americans, are “not a particularly high-skilled labor group” (Cervantes, 1992, p. 121). They are also less reluctant to take low status jobs, possibly because they perceive these jobs as an opportunity for upward mobility.

Data Collection and Management

Being an immigrant myself, and having worked in the hospitality industry in the U.S., has rendered me more sensitive to some of the experiences of other immigrants working in this country. While my personal experience was most likely very different from that of a Mexican immigrant, I believe that my awareness in the difficulties of transitioning between countries, and the challenges of working in a culturally unfamiliar place, have assisted me in this study. No research is bias free, and this is especially true in qualitative research in which “the researcher is the instrument of the research” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 27). Remaining neutral is often difficult when studying social phenomena one is passionate about. We are often sympathetic of those we study as personal values influence not only what we chose to study but also the questions we chose to ask when conducting studies (Becker, 1970; O’Brien, 1993).

Becker (1970) sees neutrality in social research as a myth because of the hierarchy in organizational settings. He proposes the term “hierarchy of credibility”, which describes our tendency to accept the statements of individuals in higher organizational levels as true, because these individuals usually have access to a more complete picture of what is going in the organization. Therefore, the question Becker
(1970) raises is not whether we should take a side, but rather, whose side are we on? Are we studying those in power positions or does our empathy lie elsewhere? Sympathies and allegiances occur naturally and, sometimes unknowingly, we take sides. It is important to recognize whose side we are on so as to prevent our personal values from biasing our research to a degree that it becomes unusable.

In this study I have obviously taken the side of the subordinate, the side of the underdog, as Becker (1970) calls it. My personal values have undoubtedly influenced my choice of population to study and possibly directed the questions I chose to ask. I feel that all individuals should be given the opportunity to progress and grow if they wish to do so, based on their skills and abilities. My assumption was that respondents would desire to progress professionally in their work lives. In order not to let that expectation bias my study, I have taken some precautionary measures described in the reliability and validity section above. Being sympathetic to our population of study may lead us to misuse our research tools—for example ask guiding questions in an interview. By following the reliability and validity guidelines, I made every effort to guard myself against these types of errors.

Some scholars may consider this tight association between the researcher and his or her research as a source of potential bias. Contrarily, it can be regarded not as a disadvantage but rather as a source of strength. As stated by Maxwell (1996):

"Separating your research from other aspects of your life cuts you off from a major source of insights, hypotheses, and validity checks" (p. 28). This is what Strauss (1987) calls 'experiential data', in which the researcher’s personal experiences, research background, and technical knowledge come into play. My affinity towards the Hispanic
population and my desire to advance knowledge in an effort to improve the lives of Hispanics in the U.S. has motivated me to pursue this research endeavor.

**Interviewing Skills**

In terms of interviewing skills, my work on two prior studies involving Hispanics has exposed me to interviewing. One project investigated the work-life challenges faced by Hispanic immigrants living and working in the U.S., such as acculturation, English language acquisition, and financial decision making (Young, 2003). The second project investigated the drivers of entrepreneurship among Hispanic immigrants, as well as some business practices and attitudes toward business ownership (Shinnar & Young, 2004). Through my work on these projects I conducted close to 50 separate face-to-face interviews (ranging from 30 minutes to over 90 minutes) and over 70 phone interviews, most of them in Spanish, with Hispanic immigrants living and working in the United States. While these projects involved structured interview protocols, I feel they have nevertheless given me a sense of how to approach interviewees. Working on these projects has increased my confidence in interacting with interviewees.

**Data Collection Method**

Qualitative research methods of data collection were used in this study because they provide rich and detailed data, embedded in the context. I chose to conduct semi-structured topical interviews with informants because they “are focused on a particular event or process, and are concerned with what happened, when, and why” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 28). My focus was on identifying the different variables that influence the desire for, and actual pursuit of, upward mobility. Semi-structured interviews are interviews in which “the researcher suggests the subject for discussion but has few
specific questions in mind” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 5). This allows the respondents to guide the conversation towards the topics they feel are most important. Structured interviews may confine the generation of new knowledge, limiting findings to only what the researcher asked explicitly. A complete standardization of an interview “would lead to an artificial situation which would be detrimental to the accuracy of the data” (Pareek & Venkateswara Rao, 1981, p. 145).

Of the nineteen interviews, all but one were tape-recorded and notes were taken during each interview as well. Interviews lasted between 40 and 90 minutes, according to each participant’s willingness to speak. While interviewees were able to terminate interviews early, not a single person asked to do so. On the contrary, several interviewees continued talking for over an hour and thanked me at the conclusion of the interview, stating they enjoyed the process. One female interviewee even hugged me and thanked me for hearing her story. Eighteen interviews were conducted in Spanish and one was conducted in English. In one instance, I decided not to ask for permission to tape record. As I walked up the driveway an older lady, who later turned out to be my interviewee, was outside. She welcomed me, and as we walked into the house together she immediately started talking about her work experiences and interactions with peers. I felt it would be better not to interrupt her and decided to conduct that interview without tape recording. Instead, I took copious notes during the interview and further expanded my notes immediately following its completion, in order to retain as much detail as possible.

Before beginning each interview, I explained to the informants the motives of the study. I clarified that my project was a requirement for the completion of my program
and that my goal was to find out more about Hispanics living in the Unites States. I stressed the fact that their participation would advance knowledge. This is important because "unless the interviewer is able to make the respondent feel that he is important and that his opinions are valuable to the interviewer, the responses may lack authenticity" (Pareek & Venkateswara Rao, 1981, p. 156). I reassured informants of confidentiality and explained that all conversations and tapes would not be shared with anyone other than in aggregate form in my final report. Confidentiality is important since past studies have found more self-disclosure under conditions of confidentiality (Pareek & Venkateswara Rao, 1981).

Semi-structured interviews include several types of questions: Descriptive, structural, and contrast questions. Descriptive questions enable the interviewer to collect an ongoing sample of the informant's language. They are also referred to as 'grand tour' questions (Spradley, 1979). For example: "Tell me about your work. What do you do? Describe a typical day at work. What do you usually do on a typical day?" I used these types of questions to start each interview to entice the interviewee to begin talking. Once the respondent has started talking I proceeded to what Spradley (1979) calls 'mini-tour' or structural questions. Structural questions enable the interviewer to discover information about the basic units in an informant's cultural knowledge (Spradley, 1979). These questions are more specific, focusing on a smaller unit of experience. For example, once an individual stated he or she thought about changing jobs, I asked: "What would you need to do in order to be promoted to become a supervisor or manager?" Finally, contrast questions are used when the interviewer wants to find out what an informant means by certain terms used in his or her native language without asking the respondent
to justify his or her answer (Spradley, 1979). For example, “How would your life be different as a supervisor or manager?” By contrasting the two situations, the interviewee provides information on why he or she feels a promotion into a supervisory position is undesirable. This allows the interviewer to identify root causes without having to ask “Why?”, which may make the interviewee feel his or her judgement is being questioned.

In addition to questions, I used non-directive probes to gain more details without imposing my own ideas and vocabulary on participants. Probes are:

brief comments or gestures that the interviewer makes while listening to the answers to keep the conversation going; to encourage the interviewee to continue on the present line of discussion; or to elaborate on a particular incident, case, or example. Probes show that the interviewer is interested and attentive while encouraging the interviewee to provide depth and detail (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 183).

A type of probe that I found to be effective in order to gain further detail without having to formulate a specific question was the repetition probe. When I repeated back to the interviewee the last part of his or her sentence, this communicated that more details were desired. Some of my probes were verbal, such as the repetition probe, while others were only gestures such as a questioning look or a nod accompanied by silence on my part which communicated that I wanted to hear more.

As I conducted the fifteenth interview, I felt that I was approaching what Glaser and Strauss (1967) call the ‘saturation point’. This point is reached when the researcher feels he or she has gained a satisfactory “understanding of the complex arena...[and] when each additional interviewee adds little to what [was] already learned” (Rubin &
After having conducted about fifteen interviews, the emergent themes were repetitive and so I decided not to conduct additional interviews beyond the one's already scheduled. Two follow up interviews were also conducted to clarify specific questions.

Data Analysis

The transcribed interviews resulted in 206 pages of analyzable material. I used a three-phase coding approach to code the transcribed interviews, the first of which is open coding. Open coding "is the part of the analysis that pertains specifically to the naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 62). The coding process breaks the data down into discrete parts which are more manageable when one wishes to examine the data more closely, compare it for similarities and differences and categorize it (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Once the data have been coded, the researcher must search for domains and/or concepts. A concept is a "label, placed on discrete happenings, events, and other instances of phenomena" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61). Each domain can include several terms linked to it by a semantic relationship (Spradley, 1979).

Numerous different categories can be identified in open coding:

1. **Phenomena.** A phenomenon can be an idea, event or happening; for example, "no desire to move into supervisory position".

2. **Causal conditions.** Causal conditions are the antecedents of the idea, event or happening; for example, "fear of failure", "fear of losing union protection",
“lack of English skills”, “no desire to work more than 40 hours a week” can be causal conditions for avoiding the move into supervisory positions.

(3) Context. Context refers to the properties pertaining to the phenomenon; for example, “labor-market conditions” or “recent industry wide layoffs” can be contextual factors contributing to the phenomenon of not desiring upward mobility.

(4) Intervening conditions. Intervening conditions include the situational factors facilitating or impeding action. For example, intervening conditions in terms of desire for upward mobility can include perceptions of discrimination, family situation—childcare responsibilities or limited availability of opportunities at work.

(5) Action/interaction strategies. Action/interaction strategies are purposeful, goal- oriented behaviors geared toward a desired outcome. For example, this may entail attending training as a way to prepare for a promotion or contrarily, declining a promotion as a strategy to avoid putting job security at risk.

(6) Consequences. Consequences are the different outcomes of the action taken to manage a specific phenomenon. For example, this may involve the perception that one has ensured job security by avoiding a promotion.

Because the data collection and data analysis processes are not linear, the analysis method is of great importance. Once a few interviews have been completed and analyzed, the researcher may have to ask verification questions to address discrepancies or questions emerging from the data. For example, as explained earlier, there seemed to be a contradiction between the way in which some interviewees described the relationships
with a co-ethnic manager versus a non-Hispanic White manager. Subsequent interviews served to verify the existence of a domain; the existence of additional terms to be included in it; and the appropriateness of the semantic relationship between a term and its domain. For example in the domain “having a co-ethnic supervisor means X” I initially included terms of positive connotation such as: “ease of communication”, “common cultural background”, and “comfort of interaction”. However, in subsequent interview analyses, the number of negative connotation terms outnumbered the first group of positive ones. These included: “poor treatment”, “humiliation”, “disrespect”, “competition”, and “discrimination”.

The process that results in the most detailed type of analysis is line-by-line analysis. Line-by-line analysis is important because emerging categories can also provide guidance on what to focus on in following interviews. It can guide the researcher to “ask questions more precisely in the next interview” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 77). For example, in the first few interviews, respondents used powerful terms to describe how their managers treated them. These included: robot, donkey, alien, thief, parasite, and invader. This led me to believe that marginalization and low status could be a possible concern for my respondents. For this reason, I decided to ask: “What do you think your employer is looking for or expects from his or her employees? What do you think your supervisor and/or manager expects from you?” I felt that this question would allow me to identify perceived marginality and relationships with non-Hispanic peers and supervisors and/or managers at work.

The second part of the analysis is the axial coding process. In axial coding, the “data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections
between categories” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 96). New connections can include, for example, causal relationships—“events, incidents, happenings that lead to the occurrence or development of a phenomenon” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 96) or outcomes of those same events, incidents or happenings. This ‘regrouping’ of the data results in the emergence of a category in terms of “the conditions that give rise to it; the context in which it is embedded; the action … strategies by which it is handled…; and the consequences of those strategies (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 97). Axial coding then, if done properly, can result in the formulation of a causal model on which practical recommendations can later be constructed.

The open coding process is the first step in the overall coding process, followed by axial coding and selective coding. However, while open and axial coding “are distinct analytic procedures, when the researcher is actually engaged in analysis he or she alternates between the two modes” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 99). The back and forth process in qualitative data analysis is ongoing as the researcher moves constantly between inductive and deductive thinking, verifying inductively what was proposed deductively.

Concepts and relationships arrived at through deductive thinking must be verified over and over again against actual data…. [The] final theory is limited to those categories, their properties and dimensions, and statements of relationships that exist in the actual data collected (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 112).

The final coding stage is selective coding. In this stage the ideas are integrated together at a higher level of abstraction. This is done by defining a story line, “a conceptualization of a descriptive story about the central phenomenon of the study”
(Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 119). To develop the story line analytically, one must seek an abstract category that encompasses the story—the core category. The central phenomenon (the core category) is given a conceptual label. It may be difficult to select a single core category. Some questions a researcher can ask him- or herself that can assist in doing so are: “What phenomena are reflected over and over again in your data? Give me a summary of your findings. What essential message about this research do you want to pass on to others? What do you consider important about this and why?” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 122).

Respondents

A total of nineteen in-depth interviews (17 interviews and two follow up interviews) were conducted with ten female and seven male Mexican, immigrant, hotel employees (for detailed demographic information see Table 5). All interviewees were employed in the Las Vegas casino-hotel industry and were members of the local union. The occupations represented included various positions in food and beverage operations: food server (2), server assistant (2), bartender (1), cook (3), kitchen worker (1) and dish washer (2) as well as several occupations in hotel operations including: housekeeper (3), porter (1), and house man (2). Respondents were on average 38.6 years old (range 24-63) and had been living in the U.S. on average for 16.6 years (range 5-37). Thirteen were married, one divorced and three were single. Educational attainment level averaged nine years of schooling (range 3-15) and work tenure was 7.4 years on average (range 2.5-25).

Interviewees were, on average, older than the median age for Hispanics living in the U.S. which is 24.7 years (Guzmán, 2001). This figure, however, might be skewed
because the sample included only working individuals, excluding children and retired people. U.S. tenure of the sample was also longer than that of the typical Latin American immigrant (Schmidley, 2001) which is 13.5 years. This difference is possibly due to the fact that proper documentation is a basic requirement for employment in the large hotel-casinos in Las Vegas, which would exclude more recent, undocumented individuals. In addition, the fact that I obtained a list from a church assisting with the citizenship process may have influenced this figure as well because there is a minimum period one must be present in the U.S. prior to being eligible to apply for citizenship. In terms of educational attainment, 47% of the sample held a high school diploma or above, which is higher than the 33.8% high school completion rate for foreign-born Mexicans (Schmidley, 2001). Possibly because most of the large casino-hotels in Las Vegas are unionized and considered good employers—offering a living wage as well as benefit and retirement plans—they tend to be more selective in hiring. Namely, employers may select more individuals holding a high school diploma. This may explain the discrepancy in the educational attainment figures. The wages of unionized casino-hotel employees in the Las Vegas area have been shown to be higher than those paid to workers in the same industry in other parts of the state (Waddoups, 2002) and are therefore desirable not only for immigrants but for workers in general.
Table 5  Interviewee Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>U.S. Tenure</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Education in Years</th>
<th>Work Tenure</th>
<th>Job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SJ</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Restaurant Food Server</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dishwasher/ Runner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Housekeeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PJL</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Bartender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FG</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>House Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GE*</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bus Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MV</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Buffet Server Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Fry Cook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGM</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DTY</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Room Service Server</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MM*</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Utility Porter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kitchen Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PM</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Housekeeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ES</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pantry Cook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Dishwasher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RME</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Housekeeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EP</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>House Man</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Individuals with whom follow up interviews were conducted.

Summary

This chapter presented the qualitative research methods employed in this study. These methods have been deemed most appropriate when investigating understudied populations (Arbona, 1995; Gomez et al., 2001; Hackett, 1997). In addition, several recent studies of career progression employed methods which indicate a distancing from the positivist approach (e.g., Bullington & Arbona, 2001; Gomez et al., 2001; Hernandez, 1995; Richie et al., 1997; Rivera, Anderson, & Middleton, 1999). This chapter described the ways in which validity and reliability were maintained throughout the processes of data collection and analysis. In order to preserve reliability and validity I (1) organized interview materials in a readily available format, (2) consulted a research partner who critically questioned my analysis; (3) constantly checked for internal inconsistencies and
potential rival hypothesis; (4) produced verbatim interview transcriptions; (5) compared results to other studies to identify converging empirical results. The way in which the research questions were operationalized was presented in Table 4. In addition, the interview protocol developmental process was presented, showing how it evolved throughout the course of data collection process. I described how access was gained and how research participants were invited to participate in the study. The data collection method was described in detail, including the interaction with interviewees. The ways in which the data were analyzed was presented including open, axial, and selective coding. Finally, some demographic information on the respondents was provided.
CHAPTER FOUR

ANTECEDENTS TO THE DESIRE OF UPWARD MOBILITY

Introduction

This study provides the basis for a theoretical model explaining the motivators and barriers to upward mobility among Mexican immigrants. The model consists of two parts: the variables influencing the desire for becoming upwardly mobile and the variables moderating the relationship between the desire and actual pursuit of upward mobility. The discussion of the findings is presented in the following two chapters. Chapter Four identifies individual variables acting as antecedents for the desire to pursue upward mobility. These include human capital, ethnic identity, cultural values, and self-concept. Chapter Five describes the second part of the model, focusing on the moderating variables, which promote or suppress the actual pursuit of upward mobility, once the individual feels the desire to become upwardly mobile. Every component of the model discussed here will be supported by data from the conducted interviews and the relevant literature. This is in line with Golden-Biddle and Locke’s (1997) recommendation to combine showing and telling—a process which links the data with theory. The model itself will be presented in Chapter Six along with summary conclusions. When direct quotes are used, they will be presented in the language in which the interview was conducted and then translated into English if necessary.
The existing literatures on Hispanic cultural values, acculturation, social identity, and ethnic identity have served as a framework for data analysis. My familiarity with these bodies of literature has allowed me to recognize relationships and links in the data that may otherwise have been overlooked. While I realize that cultural values do not apply universally to all members of a group, I nevertheless chose to study these cultural values because of their influence on attitudes and consequent behaviors, which play a role in the formation of work values as well. I believe that the familiarity with this body of literature, has provided me with additional tools—or lenses—through which I was able to make better sense of my data and discover important messages within comments made by interviewees. During the data analysis and write up stage of the study, the need to examine the literature on careers and career progression emerged. This literature became central in the write up of this study as I presented issues relevant to career progression among Mexican immigrants. This is often the case in qualitative studies, which evolve as the researcher progresses through the different stages of data collection and analysis, because hypotheses are not established before hand, research questions are written as an on-going process (Maxwell, 1996).

Upward Mobility in the Las Vegas Hospitality Industry

The Las Vegas hotel-casino industry offers a unique environment in which large corporations employ thousands of workers, many in unskilled and semi-skilled service positions. This industry provides many job opportunities for immigrants who may not have strong English skills or educational attainment levels. Promotion and job transfer opportunities exist therefore, not only into supervision and management but also into
other line-positions, which are of higher occupational status, offer better pay, and are sometimes less physically demanding. As mentioned in Chapter One, a career path does not necessarily imply vertical progression but can also consist of a simple movement among various jobs (Vondracek & Kawasaki, 1995). For example, to describe one of many possible career paths, a dishwasher could become a server assistant and later continue his or her occupational advancement to the position of a food server. Additional growth is possible when one becomes a food server in a higher caliber restaurant, gaining higher status and earning higher pay and tips.

To account for both these promotional paths, interviewees were asked whether they wanted to move into a different job with their employer as well as whether they ever thought of moving into supervision and/or management. Responses varied greatly: when a move into a different, higher-status, line-position was discussed, eight of the seventeen interviewees expressed such a desire, and five expressed a desire to move into different employment outside of the hospitality industry, possibly through business ownership. On the other hand, when supervision was discussed, only two interviewees expressed interest in such a move, and both mentioned it as a distant, long-term goal. Twelve interviewees said they would not consider a move into supervisory or managerial positions at all (this subject was not discussed in the three remaining interviews).

In the following, I examine the role of human capital, ethnic identity, and self-concept in driving the desire for upward mobility. I also discuss cultural values and their importance as antecedents to promote or suppress the desire for upward mobility.
Upward Mobility

Upward mobility and career progression have been previously defined as used in the vocational psychology and organizational behavior literatures. A question arises regarding the ways in which Mexican immigrants define upward mobility. While this question was not posed directly in any of the interviews, many comments seemed to indicate the ways in which interviewees perceived upward mobility. Four work-related aspects of upward mobility emerged in the interviews: financial advancement, higher occupational status, personal growth, and improvement in the work itself. Upward mobility in the financial advancement aspect was related to financial stability and financial self-sufficiency that one could achieve as a result of stable, paid employment. Ten of the interviewees spoke of their satisfaction with being able to afford their own home, a vehicle, and other material property. However, this aspect of upward mobility, while an outcome of work, appears to be more related to socio-economic status.

The second aspect mentioned in terms of progress was related to occupational status. Six interviewees spoke of the desire to change jobs as a way to improve their occupational status—namely moving into a higher status position. For example, RME, a female housekeeper, felt that “estar un porquito mas arriba” [being a little higher up] is desirable. Only one of these individuals, however, mentioned progression into a supervisory position, while the remaining five spoke of moving into other hourly positions. In terms of personal growth, three individuals spoke of the satisfaction one derives from personal progress and learning—simply the feeling of doing better as a person. Finally, in terms of improvement in the work itself, six individuals spoke of upward mobility as a way to obtain a job that would be less physically demanding. For
example, three individuals (two males and one female) contrasted their physically demanding work with office work, which they considered more desirable. Speaking of the days he was assigned to work in the housekeeping department office, FG, a male house man, said: “Es bonito porque allí me lo paso sentando nada más contenstando al teléfono y ya.” [It’s nice because there I spend my time sitting and answering the phone, and that’s it]. An additional three spoke of obtaining a job that would be more interesting and involve learning opportunities.

In summary, it appears that Mexican immigrants define upward mobility more in terms of horizontal movement into better jobs rather than vertical progression. A better job appears to be one that offers higher pay, is less physically demanding, and for some individuals, is more interesting and/or includes learning opportunities. A better job also has higher occupational status and provides personal satisfaction.

**Human Capital**

In an effort to identify the motivators and barriers to upward mobility, I attempted to assess the antecedents to the desire for becoming upwardly mobile. Several factors inherent to the individual emerged as initial barriers to one’s desire to pursue a job change. The first of these individual factors include human capital variables, predominantly the language barrier and limited educational attainment. Human capital factors determine one’s promotability because “employers see human capital investments as an indicator of greater productivity and/or firm commitment and tend to reward workers with greater levels of it” (Baldi & Branch-McBrier, 1997, p. 479). Eight of the interviewees mentioned lack of English proficiency as a reason for not desiring upward
mobility into other line positions and into supervision. The belief that one does not possess the basic requirements to obtain a job change may reduce the desire for pursuing career progression. In addition, the concern that one’s accent may limit the ability to communicate effectively in English and possibly create problems of miscommunication may lead some to avoid managerial positions (Rivera, Anderson, & Middleton, 1999). Other forms of capital, however, were not discussed. Cultural capital—the degree of cultural knowledge one possesses (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) was not brought up. Cultural capital relates to promotions in that it includes cultural knowledge about the Anglo value system, North American communication styles, behavioral standards, and/or job-hunting techniques (Krumboltz & Coon, 1995). The relatively long U.S. tenure of my sample could possibly explain why cultural capital was not mentioned as a concern. The need for social capital, however, was brought up by two individuals—mostly as a needed source of information. Social capital refers to the social ties that can be helpful in obtaining a promotion or learning about available opportunities (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). PJL, a male bartender, felt that

“A toda la gente Hispana, y no nada mas Hispana si no todos los inmigrantes, lo que nos hace falta son, muchas veces, son informacion y gente que te oriente en diferentes ramos de trabajo que hay. Existe mucho trabajo para gente que es bilingue mas que todo y muchas veces, por falta de informacion, los trabajos no los obtenemos.”

[All the Hispanic people, and not only Hispanics but all immigrants, what we lack is, many times, is information and people that will orient you about the different
types of jobs available. There is a lot of work for bilingual people mostly and many times, for lack of information, we don’t get these jobs].

The inability to freely communicate in English appeared to act on the very desire to pursue upward mobility. RME, a female housekeeper, spoke of the frustrations brought on by her limited English skills—she described the unpleasant feeling of having to repeat herself several times to make herself understood when communicating in English.

“Y eso uno, se hace, se siente uno descriminado—No?! Porque uno lo repite, lo repite, y uno siente que lo está haciendo bien pero hay gente que, que, que, osea le hace sentir a uno mal” (RME, female housekeeper).

[And this one, one feels discriminated against—No?! Because one repeats it, repeats it, and one feels that one is doing it well but there are people who, who, who, I mean, it makes one feel bad].

Similarly, PJL, a male bartender spoke of feelings of inferiority and shame for not speaking English. “Por el hecho de no hablar en Inglés perfecto se siente uno menos…que tiene verguenza más que todo…” [For the fact of not speaking English one feels less…feels shame more than anything].

As the two above-mentioned quotes seem to indicate, limited English skills appear to impact the desire for upward mobility indirectly—by influencing one’s self-concept. Self-concept has been identified as an important component in several career progression theories (e.g., Gottfredson, 2002; Super, 1991). It refers to the way an individual views him- or herself and is based upon, appearance, abilities, attitudes, interests, needs, personality, gender, values, and social status (Gottfredson, 2002; Tokar
et al., 2003). Feeling shame and frustration for not being able to communicate freely may lead to a low assessment of abilities which will contribute to low personal self-concept and discourage Mexican immigrants from trying to pursue, or even think about obtaining a better job. The link between the ability to speak English and perceptions of self was previously identified by Portes and Zady (2002), who found a strong association between English proficiency and self-esteem among Spanish speaking adolescents.

Limited ability to communicate in English may also influence one’s ability to forge friendships at work with non co-ethnic peers and/or supervisors. PR, a male dishwasher, spoke of the difficulty communicating with non-Spanish speakers. “Osea, que no habla uno bien, no se relaja así como, no hay mucha comunicación, pues...por el idioma.” [I mean, one does not speak well, one does not relax like, there isn’t a lot of communication, well...because of the language]. When he spoke of the good relationship he had with his coworkers, his wife (present during the interview) laughed and added: “Se llevan bien porque son nada más Latinos.” [They get along because they are all Latinos]. GE, a female server assistant, equated the language barrier to a physical handicap:

“Cuando uno no sabe leer es como que está ciego...si no sabes hablar Inglés...es como si estás mudo, porque ni puedes contestar.”

[When one doesn’t know how to read it’s like one is blind...if you don’t know how to speak English...it’s like you are mute, because you can’t even answer].

The communication issue was also mentioned in relation to the interaction with one’s supervisor. Three male respondents expressed a preference for working with a Hispanic supervisor with whom they found it was easier to communicate.
It appears that limited English proficiency influences the ability to communicate freely and develop interpersonal relationships at work, limiting interaction to co-ethnic individuals. Because interaction with the Anglo majority group is minimal, Mexican immigrants may have limited opportunities to develop social and cultural capital—variables that, as explained earlier, could be instrumental in becoming more promotable. It may also contribute to feeling isolated and disliked as stated by FG, a male house man, “Se siente uno aislado, que, un poco rechazado...Que no le quieren a uno.” [One feels isolated, that, a little rejected...That they don’t like you]. This linguistic isolation is accompanied by an isolation into ‘job ghettos’ of sorts. Ten of the sixteen interviewees who spoke about their co-workers, were employed in positions filled predominantly by other Hispanics. Five worked in positions filled by a diverse workforce including other, non-Hispanic immigrants and only PJL, a male bartender, worked in a department with few Latinos, a phenomenon also identified by Elliott and Smith (2001) who found that: “67 percent of Latinos work in mostly co-ethnic work groups” (p. 264). This could be driven by the fact that English proficiency is a requirement for most, if not all, guest contact positions, which limits many Mexican immigrants to low-status back-of-the-house positions. Given that one of the components of self-concept is social status, being relegated to these lower status occupations may negatively influence self-concept.

Self Concept

The previous section has demonstrated how human capital variables such as English proficiency may influence the self-concept. In the following, I discuss additional variables that have been identified as shaping self-concept, namely perceived social and
occupational status as well as discrimination (Miville, Koonce, Darlington, & Whitlock, 2000; Tokar et al., 2003). Some interviewee statements exposed feelings of holding low status in American society. SJ, a male food server, felt that as a Mexican immigrant he was treated as “a second class citizen.” At work he felt that his peers wanted him to stay in what they considered to be *his place*, namely a lower status position, and resented his escalation in occupational status. He felt they would see him as a “good Mexican” only if he did some of their work for them and did not aspire to progress into higher status positions as a food server in a higher caliber restaurant. In his words:

“I get really frustrated cause the way we are treated. As long as you do work for them, you’re a good Mexican or Latino....And me, being in the position that I am, cause I am equal to some of the ones who are not, so that’s why they kinda’ resent that. I mean it’s ok, for example, if there is a bus boy they’re making them do the work. In a way what I am trying to say is that they feel superior to us.”

FG, a male house man stated that Americans: “Nos ven con racismo...como que no somos de ésta tierra...o como que les vemos a quitar el trabajo o la comida.” [They see us with racism...like we are not from this planet...or like we came to take away the work or the food].

Some of the interviewees felt that Mexicans are perceived as being fit only for menial, low-status jobs. For instance, two female respondents communicated strong feelings regarding the way in which they felt Latinos were perceived. “Nosotros los Hispanos nos ven como burros” [We the Hispanics, they see us like donkeys] (ES, a female cook). And:
“dicen que el Hispano es bien tonto porque se deja que lo traten como le da la gana, y siga trabajando como el burro. Esto a veces no me ha gustado que siempre nos quieren tratar como si fueramos menos” (SE, a female housekeeper).

[They said that the Hispanic is stupid because he allows others to treat him however they feel like, and he continues working like a donkey. I didn’t like this that they always want to treat us as if we’re inferior].

These statements clearly demonstrate that Mexican immigrants feel as through they are seen as inferior. Some additional terms used by interviewees to display their feelings of being subjugated to stereotypes include: slave, stupid Mexican (SE, female housekeeper); invader (ES, female cook); robot (SJ, male food server); machine (PE, male house man); servant (GE, female bus person); alien—not from this plant (FG, male house man); thief—stealing work (FG, male house man); lazy—abusing welfare system instead of working, criminal (DTY, female food server); and parasite—living off of Government assistance (GE, female bus person). Such stereotypes may increase feelings of holding low status, which has been linked to individual self-concept formation (Gottfredson, 2002).

Discriminatory practices were brought up regarding what was perceived as preferential treatment toward other employees of different ethnic groups. SJ, a male food server, felt that managers “don’t treat everybody fairly…certain people you just don’t reprimand.” Five interviewees spoke of unequal demands placed on Latinos, namely that Latinos were given more work than their White and African American coworkers. ES, a female cook, felt that Latinos were pushed harder at work. “Y a quien puchan para hacer el doble trabajo?…somos nosotros los Hispanos.” [And who do they push to do double
amount of work?...us, the Hispanics]. MV, a female server assistant, felt that less
discipline is exercised on White and African American coworkers when compared to
Latinos. She expressed anger that the set-up work at the buffet was done mostly by
Latinos without assistance from White and African American peers. “Y los
Anglosajones y los Morenos andan caminando asi, y no les dicen nada....Entonces,
mientras lo hago yo, mientras lo hacen otros, los demás andan caminando, platicando,
que se van a fumar.” [And the Anglo Saxons and the African Americans they walk
around like that, and they don’t tell them anything....So, while I do it, while others do it,
they walk around, talking, they go to smoke].

PR, a male dishwasher, felt that his co-ethnic manager asked more work from
Latino employees so as to improve his relationship with White and African American
employees:

“Que el manager...un Latino tambiên, hecha al mismo Latino, lo traía más, éste:
“Tu vas hacer esto y tu vas hacer el otro!” Más trabajo, más rápido. Y al
Americano y al Moreno no les decía: “Hay que hacer esto, hay que hacer el
otro”....Porque a nosotros nos manda más y porque a ellos no les dice nada? Ellos
siempre salen del área de su trabajo y no les dice nada y a uno, tantito se
desaparece: “Donde fuiste—ya terminaste tu trabajo?” Y esto? Y ya decimos
porque, si es la misma raza Latina?...Para estar bien con ellos.”
[That the manager...a Latino as well, puts onto another Latino, has him more like:
“You will do this and you will do that!” More work, faster. And to the American
and the African American he didn’t tell them: “This needs to be done, that need to
be done”...Why does he order us more and why doesn’t he tell them anything?}
They always leave the work area and he doesn’t tell them anything and to you, you only disappear and immediately: “where did you go—did you already finish your work?” like that. And we say why, if he is from the same Latin race?…To look good with them].

Such differential treatment at work may lead to feelings of discrimination, which has been previously identified as detrimental to the formation of individual self-concept (Miville et al., 2000).

One of the components of vocational self-concept mentioned in Chapter Two was vocationally relevant attitudes (Tokar et al., 2003). If an individual does not see him- or herself doing a certain job, he or she will certainly not pursue it. For example, GE, a female server assistant, spoke of wanting to take a job in the local school district. The two possible positions she identified as available to her in this sector were either in the student cafeteria (serving or preparing food) or as a cleaning person. Similar attitudes, of not belonging in higher level positions, emerged in other interviews as well. For example, SJ, a male food server, explained why he felt uncomfortable thinking about becoming a manager. He saw managers as part of a “little club” or a “little league” where he did not feel he belonged.

“Within our own restaurant, there are groups within even different departments, like the dealers they have a little area, and management it’s like their little club. They have, like before we open, there’s another management that comes from another restaurant and they kinda’ sit around. And they, and my view is, they fantasize of the things of the past, of the things of the future, and again I don’t know, I don’t get comfortable with that.”
FG, a male cook, spoke in the same way, stressing the status differential between employees and managers saying that “ni podemos entrar en la oficina.” [We can’t even go into the office]. It seems that FG saw the workplace as divided into areas where line employees were allowed to be and the places to which their access was denied.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, ethnic identity can serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy when individuals live according to the stereotypes placed upon them (Cohen & Roper, 1985). In this case, externally defined role expectations are incorporated into the individual’s self-concept resulting in a lower evaluation of personal abilities (Moore, 1985) and placing additional constraints on personal aspirations. A similar phenomenon was discussed by MacLeod (1995) in his study of inner city youths’ occupational aspirations. He coined the term “leveled aspirations” to describe the limited aspirations of low-income youths growing up in a public housing development. MacLeod (1995) felt that “individuals in a stratified social order come to accept their own position and the inequalities of the social order as legitimate” (p. 112). One group of young men he interviewed appeared to “view their prospects for substantial upward mobility as very remote which accounts for their low occupational aspirations...[They] see a ladder [of social mobility] with no rungs on it, or at least none they can reach” (MacLeod, 1995, p. 114). Limiting one’s aspirations then, could be a sort of defense mechanism to avoid failure and subsequent loss of face or disappointment when upward mobility in denied. It appears that similar attitudes may be leveling the aspirations of Mexican immigrants as well.
Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity has been shown to play an important role in personality development among ethnic minorities (Arbona, 1995). It refers to the way a person feels about being affiliated with one’s socially ascribed ethnic group versus the dominant or majority group and influences the ways in which individuals relate to themselves and their co-ethnic peers as a subgroup of the dominant society (Arbona, 1995). While some believe ethnic identity can help reduce psychological distress (Nesdale, Rooney, & Smith, 1997), others see it as a source of stress in the acculturation process (Leonardelli & Tormala, 2003). For example, when one identifies undesirable characteristics in one’s ethnic group, psychological stress may increase. This concern was raised by four interviewees who, using the term “conformistas,” described others Mexicans as conforming to their situation—accepting their sort without trying to improve it beyond the basic necessities of life. They used this term pejoratively, seeing it as a lamentable characteristic of their ethnic group. For them, the pursuit of upward mobility, into higher level line positions, was desirable because it could serve as a way to differentiate themselves from other Mexicans whom they saw as “conformistas.” Examples of discontent with conforming behavior were:

- “Que hay gente que se conforma con quedarse, con quedarse en un solo nivel. De lavaplatos, yo he conocido personas que tienen 10-15 años y están de lo mismo, y no, yo siento que yo si he progresado un poquito...en las posiciones, y eso, y me hace sentir bien” (ST, male cook).
There are people who conform with staying, staying at one level. As a dishwasher, I knew people who have 10-15 years doing the same, and no, I think that if I advanced a little... in the positions and that, and it makes me feel good.

- "El Mexicano no se supera porque no quiere. Aquí hay oportunidades, quizás somos flojos" (FG, male house man).

The Mexican does not advance because he does not want to. Here there are opportunities; maybe we are lazy.

- "Entonces yo pienso que, que también uno se, dicen que uno, como de México, si vienen, esos son muy conformistas, uno no más trata para que salga para la comida y para pagar los biles y ya con ésto ya, ya la hice" (GE, female server assistant).

So I think that, that one also, they say that one, like from Mexico, they come, they are very conforming. One only wants to have enough for food and paying bills and that's it. You already did it.

- "Yo he mirado en los Latinos que habemos muchos que somos conformistas. Ya porque.... yo pienso que eso es en la persona. Ya es personal, porque si yo digo: "Bueno ahorita ya esto bien, asi me voy a qudar." Osea, porque? Porque si estoy joven y puedo salir adelante. Entonces, este, eso si mira uno, yo he mirado en los Latinos que habemos muchos que somos conformistas, ..."Ok pues ya, ya tengo un trabajo, ya!” Muchos de nosotros: “Para que hablamos Ingles si ya tengo mi trabajo y hablan Español.” Osea, yo pienso que no es eso, es donde uno tiene que decir: Tengo, que aprender... hablar Ingles" (PM, female maid).

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[I’ve seen people among the Latinos that we have many who are conforming. Already because...I think that this is in the person. Because this is already personal, because if I said: “Well now I am doing well, I am going to stay like this.” I mean, why? Because if I am young and I can get ahead. So, I mean, this is what one sees. I saw in the Latinos that we have many who are conforming,...“Ok, well I already have a job and that’s it!” Many of us: “Why speak English if I already have my job?” and they speak Spanish. I mean, I think that this is not it, this is where one has to say: I have to learn...to speak English].

Feeling dissatisfaction with one’s social group, as show by the above excerpts, may entice the individual to apply various coping mechanisms. These coping mechanisms, and their impact on the desire for upward mobility, are discussed in the following section.

Ethnic Identity and Coping

As discussed in Chapter Two, negatively evaluating certain characteristics of one’s group may result in a negative social identity. This may entice some individuals to want to leave their group by differentiating themselves from it. One of the coping strategies—leaving one’s ethnic group—may prove difficult, if not impossible, for Mexican immigrants who are often significantly different (e.g. in skin color or language) from the majority group. However, obtaining a promotion could serve to achieve such a differentiation. Therefore it seems that a negative social identity held by minority group members could increase the desire to pursue upward mobility. For example, PM, a female housekeeper, expressed her desire to show Anglos that Latinos can also do better. “Que el blanco también mire que no nos venimos a quitar el trabajo, que también nos
venimos a superar, igual como ellos—que viven aquí.” [That the White person should also see that we did not come to take the work, that we also came to improve our lives, just like them—who live here]. Similarly DTY, a female food server, discussed the image North Americans held of Mexican immigrants, an image she felt was gradually changing.

“Antes era, la gente venía que no hablava nada, ni una palabra en Inglés. Solo venía trabajar en el campo. Y ellos veían, como, así es esta gente. Pues, no, para nada, sabe otras cosas! Y al contrario, ahora, rápido, estamos metiendonos hasta en la política en los puestos importantes del gobierno, en las empresas. Y ellos van a mirar al rato, se va a mesclar.”

[Before it was, the [Mexicans] came and they could speak nothing, not even one word of English. They only came to work in the fields. And [the Anglos] saw, like, that’s how these people are. Well, this isn’t so, the [Mexicans] know other things! And on the contrary, now, quickly, we are placing ourselves all the way into politics and in important Government positions, in businesses. And [the Anglos] will see shortly, it will mix].

A second coping technique involves engaging in social action in order to change the way one’s social group is perceived. While large-scale social action to promote changes was not mentioned by any of the interviewees, some felt they could engage in responsible behavior to contribute to the eradication of the negative stereotype attached to Mexican immigrants. Interviewees felt that, at times, Latinos themselves were responsible for creating these negative stereotypes because of their behaviors. Speaking of deteriorating neighborhoods when Latinos become the majority in a residential area
ES, a female cook, felt that Latinos were to blame for antagonizing Anglos. She stated: “Nos encargamos de que nos quieren correr, que nos quieren sacar de aquí.” [We are responsible for them wanting to run us out, that they want us out of here]. Other expressed anger at those Latinos who were abusing the welfare system, receiving financial support and other government assistance while they could be working. Four individuals expressed disapproval of those Latinos who were “viviendo de otra gente” (SE, female housekeeper) [living off of other people] and who were seen as responsible for giving all Latinos a bad reputation. These individuals expressed pride in being financially independent and self-sufficient within their family unit. PGM, a male cook, stressed the fact that he would rather have less than give others the reason to speak poorly of Latinos. “No quiero que hablen mal de nosotros.” [I don’t want people to speak poorly of us [Latinos]]. Similarly, DTY, a female food server, mentioned:

“Hay mucha gente que viene y se pone a collectar welfare, y tu sabes que ese welfare viene de los impuestos que todos pagamos. Y entonces ellos dicen, yo he oido que dicen: “Ay pues, a otro que mantener!” Porque es de los impuestos de la gente, y si uno puede trabajar, pues, porque venir hacer eso? Al contrario, venir a, y con lo que, lo poco que uno trabaje va ayudar, va ayudar al desaroyo de la economía. Si empiezas con tu economía de la casa que te mejoro, estas mejorando para todos” (DTY, female food server).

[There are many people who come and start collecting welfare, and you know that this welfare comes from the taxes we all pay. And so they say, I heard them [Americans] say: “Ah well, another one to support!” Because it is from the people’s taxes, and if one can work, well, why come here and do that? On the
contrary, comes and, with what one, with the little one work one can help, will help the development of the economy. If you start with your economy of the home that you improved, you are improving for everyone].

The desire to move up then, may be driven not only by the need to improve one’s occupational status and solidify one’s financial standing but also in order to differentiate oneself from less successful Latinos, who are sometimes seen as the reasons for negative stereotypes.

ES, a female cook, expressed a desire to be accepted by Anglos:

“Yo quisiera que no nos vean asi, que nos vean parte de....Superarnos, y sobre todo demostrarles que no somos, a la gente de aquí, que no somos invasores, que también queremos aprender y superarnos igual que ellos.”

[I would like for them not to see us this way, that they should see us as part of....improve ourselves, and above all show them that we are not, to the people from here, that we are not invaders, that we also want to learn and to improve ourselves, just like they do].

Possibly, the need to differentiate oneself from other Latinos, with whose behaviors one is dissatisfied, may be seen as a way to contribute to gradually changing negative stereotypes attached to Mexicans. One way to do that could be by improving one’s occupational standing, so as to demonstrate to the majority group that Hispanics, and Mexicans specifically, are also capable of growth in terms of occupational status. A similar attitude was identified among highly acculturated Asian Americans who had a “higher tendency to chose traditionally closed occupations to prove to European Americans they are not stereotypically Asian” (Leong & Serafica, 2001, p. 197, emphasis...
added). This desire to become equal with Anglos, and be recognized as such, may act as a motivator to continue one's personal growth.

A third way to cope with a negative ethnic identity is to change one's interpretation of certain group attributes. This was mentioned by three interviewees, who proudly identified Mexicans as being hard workers. By taking pride in an attribute of their group—namely the identity of the hard worker and the fact that this characteristic is a quality inherent to Mexicans—these individuals were focusing on what they perceived as a positive attribute of their group. Statements like "El Latino es buen trabajador" [The Latino is a good worker] (MM, female utility porter) or "El Mexicano trabaja duro" [The Mexican works hard] (FG, male house man) were not uncommon. FG, a male house man, differentiated himself from Anglos by adopting the identity of the hard worker.

"El Mexicano es mejor trabajador que el Americano, el Mexicano hace casas, el Mexicano va a los campos, el Mexicano trabaja en lo que sea. El Americano quiere trabajar puro, puro trabajo facilito y bien pagado. Y el Mexicano no le importa que le pagaron cinco pesos la hora o veinte o treinta. El Mexicano trabaja más duro. Y el Americano siempre trabaja pero en trabajos faciles."

[The Mexican is a better worker than the American, the Mexican builds homes, the Mexican goes to the fields, the Mexican works in anything. The American wants to work only, only in easy jobs and well paid. And the Mexican does not care if he is paid five dollars an hour, or twenty or thirty. The Mexican works harder. And the American always works but in easy jobs].

The identity of the hard worker may contribute to the acceptance of one's occupational status as a given situation. Contrary to the two coping mechanisms
discussed above, in this coping mechanism, of protecting one's positive ethnic identity, the focus on the identity of the hard worker may stop the pursuit upward mobility. When an individual identifies him- or herself as a hard worker, pursuing a job that is perceived as easier may cause cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Cognitive dissonance theory is based on the principle that people seek to maintain consistency, or fit, between the affective, cognitive, and behavioral processes of an attitude. Individuals experience cognitive dissonance when they hold beliefs that are inconsistent—in dissonance—with another belief or behavior (Festinger, 1957). Therefore when an individual sees him- or herself as a blue-collar worker, pursuing upward mobility into a less hands-on type of job, in an office for example, or as a supervisor, may cause cognitive dissonance because the attitude no longer matches the behavior.

In addition, physical labor is considered more masculine and may therefore be chosen as a focus by males. This attitude is clearly visible in the above mentioned quote from the interview with FG. He saw easy jobs as less deserving of respect than physically demanding jobs. This attitude was also identified by McLeod (1995) in his study of low-income youths. McLeod (1995) felt that the reproduction of the low social status across generations was rooted in the "cultural inversion by which manual labor, equated with the social superiority of masculinity, is valued over white-collar work, which is associated with the inferior status of femininity" (p. 123). Indeed, Mexican culture was identified as masculine (Hofstede, 1980), in which "ostentatious manliness—machismo—is appreciated" (p. 49).

Other variables that may influence one's desire to pursue upward mobility are imbedded in Latin American cultural values. Cultural values are important to consider
because they “tell us what to care about, what to strive for, and how to behave” (Thiederman, 1991, p. 81). Cultural values shape behavior and determine what an individual may consider important or worthwhile. In the following, I will discuss how Hispanic cultural values influence the desires for upward mobility among Mexican immigrants.

**Culture and Upward Mobility**

As values determine what people care about (Connor & Becker, 1994; Krumboltz & Coon, 1995; Thiederman, 1991), Hispanic cultural values are likely to influence Mexican immigrants’ feelings regarding upward mobility. In addition, values have been shown to influence the formation of individual self-concept (Gottfredson, 2002; Tokar et al., 2003) and should therefore be considered in the study of career progression because they may act to both increase and suppress the desire for upward mobility.

I found limited support for the importance of the collectivism and high power distance cultural values in my data. While Hofstede (1980) described the Hispanic culture as collectivist, I found no support for this in relation to career progression. Rather, individuals spoke of satisfaction from personal achievement as a motivation to pursue upward mobility. Hofstede’s (1980) seminal studies conducted in the late 1970s, identified Hispanic culture as holding more collectivist tendencies—being low on individualism. Since then, a shift in Mexican society toward increased individualism has been reported (Fernandez, Carlson, Lee, & Nicholson, 1997). In addition, the acculturation to life in the U.S. may potentially influence values as well. Among the eight interviewees who desired to become upwardly mobile in terms of moving into a
different, higher level, line position, the most frequently mentioned motive was intrinsic. This included taking advantage of the opportunity for personal growth in terms of improving one’s life and the personal satisfaction from escalating in occupational status. Six respondents spoke of the desire to move ahead and advance as the motivator to seek a better job. For example, DTY, a female food server, stated: “Tratando de mejorar…uno va aspirando a seguir avanzando y ganar mejor trabajo.” [Trying to improve…one aspires to continue advancing and earn a better job]. ES, a female cook, said: “Quisiera estar subiendo y subiendo, aprendiendo más, estar escalando.” [I would like to be moving up and moving up, learning more, moving up]. Two other respondents spoke of the opportunity to do a new job that is more interesting—a change in the routine—as well as having new learning opportunities, which would improve future occupational prospects. As mentioned earlier, the ability to move into higher status positions may even carry special satisfaction for many Mexican immigrants as a way to differentiate themselves from the negative stereotypes often attached to their ethnic group in the United States.

The second cultural value for which I found no support in my data was power distance.

Mexican culture has been identified as ranking high on power distance, which refers to the degree to which the members of a society accept the unequal distribution of power in society (pluralist vs. elitist) (Fernandez, et al., 1997; Hofstede, 1980). Individuals from high power distance cultures are believed to be more likely to accept the unequal power distribution at work. I did not find indications of this cultural value among my interviewees. Contrarily, four interviewees spoke about their habit to stand up for
themselves at work when they felt their managers were being unfair. For example, SE, a female maid, felt that there was no need to blindly obey what managers said: “Porque uno sea Hispano...no quiere decir que se puede tratar como esclavo.” [Because you are Hispanic...does not mean that you can be treated like a slave]. In addition, MM, a female utility porter, spoke of joking with her supervisor during a break. PR’s wife, a female maid, who was present during the interview, proudly told me how she and her peers stood up for themselves and complained when a new manager put out a memo banning the use of Spanish on the job. Similarly, GE, a female server assistant, said “yo pienso que no se puede quedar uno callado, porque el estar callado, pues mas lo ignoran.” [I think that one can not stay quiet, because when you don’t say anything, well, they will ignore you even more]. These reported behaviors are not consistent with behaviors associated with high power distance, such as being unlikely to question authority or conforming to autocratic, authoritarian attitudes from managers (Marin & Marin, 1991). Possibly the awareness of having the union’s protection encourages these individuals to be more outspoken. The individuals who, on the other hand, expressed a fear of speaking up, explained that this preference was due to the fear of management retaliation and not because they felt a supervisors and/or should be respected for his or her higher status.

In the following sections each cultural value for which I found support in my data is discussed in terms of its influence on an individual’s desire to pursue upward mobility. These cultural values include simpatia, high uncertainty avoidance, familialism, present time orientation, and fatalismo.
Simpatia

Interpersonal relationships (with guests, peers, and supervisors and/or managers) emerged as a central theme across virtually all interviews. This is not surprising given the Latin American cultural values of simpatia and personalismo, which indicate a preference for behaviors that promote conflict-free and pleasant social relationships (Marin & Marin, 1991). Hispanics tend to avoid conflict and place an emphasis on dignified and respectful behaviors. Social interactions at work were discussed as a source of comfort or, on the other hand, act as a major stressor. The ability to socially interact with others at work was frequently mentioned as an important and positive job characteristic. Some interviewees, working in direct guest contact positions, mentioned the satisfaction that can be derived from interaction with guests. DTY, a female food server described her work as “muy agradable, convive uno con mucha gente.” [Very pleasant, one interacts with many people]. Interaction among peers—or compañerismo—and mutual assistance/team-work was often cited as a source of comfort and positive feelings. In the words of FG, a male house man: “Platicamos con los compañeros y vacilamos. Un ambiente bueno…son compañeros de muchos años…nos conocemos bien y somos buenos amigos.” [We talk with the coworkers and have a good time. It’s a good atmosphere…these are coworkers of many years…we know each other well and we are good friends]. Or PF, a female dishwasher who stated: “Me siento contenta con mis compañeros…nos ayudamos.” [I feel satisfied with my coworkers…we help each other].

GE, a female server assistant, when asked how she would feel working in a department with a predominantly non-Hispanic group of peers said:
"Yo he convivido con Americanos tambien, muchas buenas personas, pero le da a uno mas confianza tambien la gente Hispana. Este, como, la atreva el Ingles, habla uno mejor su lengua, se entiende mejor, es su cultura pues."

[I worked with Americans as well, many good people, but one feels more secure with Hispanic people. I mean, like, you are afraid of the English, you speak better in your own language, you understand better, it's your culture after all].

Possibly, the desire to remain in departments where the workforce is mostly co-ethnic limits the options that Hispanic immigrants consider as viable.

This may be related to Hispanics' co-worker involvement preference. Co-worker involvement preference refers to the degree to which an employee values association with co-workers. In the United States relationships with co-workers are likely "to be more distant, mirroring relationships in the larger society" (Pelled & Xin, 1997, p. 190). The Mexican culture on the other hand, stresses the importance of friendships and collegial relations at work and Mexican workers are more likely to assist co-workers than North American workers are. Some individuals felt that moving into a supervisory position would damage interpersonal relationships with peers for two main reasons: First, because managers have to deal with disciplinary issues and handle internal politics and, second, because of the reactions of co-ethnic peers when one pursues upward mobility.

SJ, a male food server, felt that managers need to act with hypocrisy because they must deal with top management, employees and guests. PJL, a male bartender, felt that managers are forced to lie because of the internal politics they must handle.

"Políticas, es que, usted tiene que decirles a unas personas una cosa y decirles a otras personas otra, y así mentirles sin metirles a todos—verdad?! Que tiene que
cumplir con sus jefes al hacer una cosa y tiene que cumplir con los empleados haciendo otra.”

[Politics, it’s that, you have to say one thing to some people and another thing to other people, and this way be lying to them without lying to all of them—right?! You have to meet the requirements of your bosses doing one thing and you have to satisfy your employees doing another thing].

Similarly, PF, a female dishwasher, felt that managers make many enemies, which she considered undesirable when one has to spend eight hours at work every day. In her words:

“Se hace uno muchos de enemigos, muchos compañeros. Porque es poquita la diferencia que se paga, que les pagan a los manejadores por, por tener ese cargo—es poco dinero. Y tener muchos, como se dice, muchos enemigos, muchos enemigos. Porque no a toda la gente uno, cuando uno es manejador no a toda la gente le cae uno bien. Y a mucha gente, si le mandan hacer algo—no quieren, y qué cosa hace el supervisor? Pelearse con ellos o correrlos? Si no, no todo el tiempo vas estar haciendo eso. Y esa posición, No! No me llama la atención. Porque para ir a trabajar necesitas que estar bien con todos, para ir a trabajar—porque pasamos ocho horas trabajando, y para estar…mal, y hablando uno del otro y eso, pues, que no esta bien.”

[One makes many enemies, many coworkers. Because it is small the difference in pay, what they pay managers to, to have this burden—it’s little money. And having many, how would you say, many enemies, many enemies. Because not even one, when one is a manager not everyone likes you. And many people, if]
you tell them to do something—they don’t want to, and what does the supervisor do? Fight with them and fire them? Otherwise, not all the time would you be doing that. And this position, No! It does not call my attention. Because to go to work you need to have good relationships with everyone, to go to work—because we spend eight hours working, and to be...bad, and speaking one about the other and that kind of stuff, well, that’s not good].

Therefore, if becoming a supervisor is likely to increase interpersonal conflicts at work, it may be an undesirable move for a Hispanic individual who places a value on *simpatia*.

An additional suppressor of the desire for upward mobility appears to lie in the reactions of co-ethnic peers. Interviewees reported that co-ethnic peers expressed dissatisfaction when one attempted to pursue upward mobility. For example, ES, a female cook, was concerned about the fact that: “Yo veo gente, mi propia raza, gente Latina, cuando ven que alguien va subir, se encargan de que no suba.” [I see people, my own race, Latin people, when they see that someone is about to move up, they make sure that this person does not move up]. Such critical attitudes among co-ethnic peers were also documented in other studies. For example, successful Hispanic women felt as though they were being viewed by their co-ethnic community as having sold out for being successful in American standards (Gomez et al., 2001). Another study found that Mexican-American students pejoratively called their more academically successful peers “Wannabes,” that is, they despised them for wanting to become White (Matute-Bianchi, 1986) or become successful according to White standards.

These comments seem to convey a certain criticism within the Mexican community of those who behave in ways identified with North American culture. A
certain degree of internal pressure appears to exist from within the Hispanic community to retain one’s Hispanic identity. ES, a female cook, also spoke of receiving critical reactions when she tried to comment to co-ethnic peers on what she felt was inappropriate behavior. For example, when she spoke with other Mexicans about the need to preserve the cleanliness and good repair in predominantly Latino areas of residence, her peers criticized her, stating: “Ya te hiciste de aquí Americana.” [You’re already from here, you became American]. Because the approval of one’s social circle can be of great importance, especially when one is part of a minority, some individuals may chose to conform so as to maintain correct relationships within their social group.

Possibly, the importance placed on maintaining good interpersonal relationships with peers, namely the importance placed on the simpatía and personalismo values discussed earlier, would act as a cultural barrier to seeking upward mobility into supervisory positions and sometimes even into higher level line positions. Those who wish to grow in American organizations may be seen as moving away from their ethnic identity. Being alienated by one’s ethnic peer group and not accepted by the majority group may place the individual in a social void, which may also contribute to psychological distress. For example, SJ, a male food server, speaking of Mexico stated that: “I am a stranger in my own country.” Yet he did not feel at home in the United States either, stating that his social circle was predominantly comprised of other Mexicans. Indeed, Sodowsky, Lai, and Plake (1991) found that, in the acculturation process, the greatest amount of stress may occur when the individual feels marginalized, distanced from his or her original cultural life-style but not accepted into, or personally accepting of, the dominant cultural life-style. This could be especially difficult for
individuals of Hispanic origin who place importance on the social aspect of their lives. Indeed social support of one’s ethnic group has been identified as a support mechanism in a new country, which helps immigrants preserve their mental health (Escobar, 1998).

**High Uncertainty Avoidance**

Concerns with reducing uncertainty emerged in several interviews. Uncertainty avoidance, which the Mexican culture ranks high on, means that individuals are uncomfortable with or threatened by uncertain, ambiguous, or unstructured situations (Hofstede, 1980). A move into a new job can represent such an uncertain and ambiguous situation. The explanations offered by many of the interviewees for the reason why they did not want to pursue a different job, appear to represent an adherence to the cultural value of uncertainty avoidance. FG, a male house man, preferred to remain in his job which he has been doing for 13 years because:

“Ya allí sabemos, ya sabemos lo que tenemos que hacer, el trabajo está, ya sabemos. En otra parte vamos a tener muchos jefes, muchos, quizás las cosas sean peor. Entonces allí nos quedamos hasta que, hasta que Dios quiera—verdad?! Puedes ir a otro trabajo mejor pero maybe, van a dar laid off...Quizas las cosas sean peor...da miedo moverse...quizás por mejorar, voy a perder.”

[There we already know, we know what we have to do, the work is, we already know. In another place we will have many bosses, many, maybe things will be worse. So there we stay, until, until God willing—right?! You can go to another better job but maybe they will lay off....Maybe things will be worse, maybe to improve I will end up losing].
The uncertainty of having to work with a new manager and new coworkers also led MM, a female utility porter, to remain in the same job. She was satisfied with her position of utility porter, which she had been doing for three years because she felt it was a great improvement over her previous job as a housekeeper, which she did for seven years. She explained her motivation for the initial job change:

"Porque de maid es mucho trabajo. Es un trabajo muy pesado. Tenía que hacer 17-18 cuartos diarios...El otro trabajo es más liviano. Voy trabajando menos. De maid es muy pesado. Es un trabajo muy duro. Todos los días 18 cuartos, extra clean y todo eso....[De porter] es un lugar donde trabajar menos y donde se paga más."

[Because as a maid it’s a lot of work. It’s a physically demanding job. I had to do 17-18 rooms daily...The other job is lighter. I work less. As a maid it’s very physically demanding. It’s very hard work. Every day 18 rooms, extra clean and all that...[As a porter] it’s a place where I work less and a place where you are paid more].

Having reduced the physical demands inherent to her work, MM felt satisfied and desired no further occupational advancement. Her reason for not seeking any further job changes were: “Los jefes me tratan bien...el trabajo no es pesado, el trabajo está bien, y luego los compañeros también, para que buscar otro lado—mejor así.” [The managers treat me well...the work is not physically hard, and then the coworkers as well, why look for a different place—it’s better like this]. MV, a female server assistant, expressed similar feelings. Although she felt a strong desire to change jobs, MV thought it would jeopardize her job security. “Nadie se quiere mover de su trabajo sabiendo que aquí
tienes un full time y lo vas a perder sólo por moverte así que eso no es una buena opción.” [Nobody wants to move from their job, knowing that here you have a full time and you will lose it only for moving so this is not a good option]. Possibly, the fear of uncertainty leads individuals to place great emphasis on job security, thus not desiring to pursue a job change that could jeopardize it.

In addition, two interviewees spoke of the loss of union protection when one is promoted to a supervisory position. This seems to indicate that there is a lack of trust in management and that Mexican immigrants see a promotion as something that could increase the risk of being laid off or otherwise harassed without being able to defend oneself. PJL, a male bartender, felt that at times managers can not be trusted. He felt that “Con los jefes, les cree uno lo que ellos dicen, porque no puede poner en duda sus palabras tampoco—verdad?! Pero, de que muchas veces no mas te estan diciendo para que, como para quitarte de alli.” [With the bosses, one believe what they say because one can not doubt their words either—right?! But, it’s that many times they just tell you what ever so that, like to get you out of their face].

This tendency has previously been identified among Latin American individuals whose culture is categorized as being high on power distance, leading Hispanics to be less likely to trust individuals in power positions within organizations (Thiederman, 1991). It also seems to imply a fear of failure, that one would risk losing the job if unable to perform the requirements of the new position. Indeed, Hofstede (2001) found Latin American employees to “be more concerned with a fear of failure” (p. 160). The experience of PM,
a female housekeeper, was especially telling regarding the break down process of the trust placed in management.

PM requested a transfer from the position of housekeeper to that of server assistant within the same company. My interview was conducted during the week she was not working between these two positions. She felt that this move would improve her quality of life since she would be less tired, because the new job would be less physically demanding, and thus she would be able to dedicate more time to her children and possibly to English language acquisition. Due to what she perceived to be indifference, she was not notified that this transfer would lead to a loss of seniority and therefore loss of the accrued weeks of paid vacation. She spoke at length about the feelings of betrayal and how this experience hurt her trust in management:

"Yo me siento corrida. Me siento que no respetaron mi, mi, pues mi dignidad como trabajadora todo eso. Me siento, pues, no se tal vez por mi posición de trabajo, o tal vez por ser inmigrante, o tal vez por ser simplemente Latina que no quisieran darme la información que tienen que haberme dado. De haber sido honestos conmigo, y eso, pues, en estos días he tenido un stress que sí le duele a uno porque si son seis años de trabajo y que no valoren a uno sus seis años de trabajo....Se siente uno frustrado en ese rato."

[I feel like I was fired. I feel that they didn’t respect my, my, well my dignity as a worker and all that. I feel, well, I don’t know maybe for my work position, or maybe for being an immigrant, or maybe just for being a Latina that they didn’t want to give me the information that they should’ve given me. To be honest with me, and that, well, these days I experienced much stress, and yes it hurts you
because these are six years of work and they don’t value one’s six years of work….One feels frustrated in this moment].

Given that the Hispanic culture is relationship oriented, such experiences are likely to circulate between employees, in a rumor mill, possibly further damaging trust in management. PM spoke of rumors, which she initially did not believe in, that the company wanted long tenured employees to leave or change jobs so as to reduce the costly expense on long periods of paid vacation. Her experience made her feel as though these rumors were true. This is likely to limit any further job changes on her part, and possibly for others with whom she would share her experiences. A lack of trust in management possibly accentuates the need to avoid uncertainty, further suppressing the desire for career progression.

Familialism

Familialism refers to an “individuals’ strong identification with and attachment to nuclear and extended families and strong feelings of loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity among members of the same family” (Marín & Marín, 1991, p. 13). This value may influence one’s desire to seek upward mobility if a job change will impact the number of hours worked, or impact one’s family life in other ways. For example, taking on a supervisory position usually means working more than 40 hours a-week which would possibly reduce one’s free time spent with family. However, moving into a higher-level line position that is less physically demanding and offers higher pay, may be perceived as having a positive impact on one’s family life. This motivator was especially prevalent among women who reported suffering from the physically demanding work they had to do as housekeepers, dishwashers, and server assistants.
Two of the three female housekeepers interviewed felt that having a job that was less physically demanding would positively influence their family life since they would be less tired and so, able to dedicate more time to their family and household. Explaining why changing one's job is desirable, RME, a female housekeeper said: “Entonces, uno se siente mejor, se cansa menos, es mejor, se siente mejor con su familia. Osea, la trata uno mejor.” [So one feels better, you are less tired, it's better, you feel better with your family. I mean, you treat your family better]. Based on the importance of familialism in the Mexican culture, it appears that when upward mobility is perceived as beneficial to one's family life, it is a desirable prospect. Furthermore, RME's words clearly communicate the value hierarchy, placing the welfare of her family and her children before her own personal desires. RME did not like her work but she felt that she should “segir trabajando para que ellos tengan aseguranza.” [keep on working so that they [my children] can have insurance].

On the other hand, moving into a supervisory position usually means one changes from being paid hourly to having a fixed salary. This frequently involves working more than the regular 40 hours a week, which would take away from one's time spent with family, a concern clearly stated by PGM, a male cook. He felt that as a manager: “No hay vida personal, no más en el trabajo, en el puro trabajo, y trabajo, y trabajo. Y si, ganas mucho dinero, pero no tienes vida personal.” [There is no personal life, only work, pure work, and work, and work. And yes, you earn a lot of money but you have no personal life]. This concern was also raised by several female interviewees, who felt that they could not pursue a supervisory position because of their childcare duties. For example, SE, a female housekeeper, felt that a supervisory job would require: “Muchas
horas de trabajo y cuando uno tiene hijos es más difícil estar tantas horas allí.” [Many hours of work and when one has children it’s more difficult to be so many hours there].

The central role of family in the life of Mexican immigrants appears to both enhance the desire for upward mobility and suppress it—according to the outcomes associated with a job change.

**Present Time Orientation**

Individuals who are present-oriented have a limited tendency to create a detailed vision of the future and usually focus more on “meeting today’s obligations and enjoying the present moment” (Thiederman, 1991, p. 81). PJL, a male bar tender clearly described this situation:

“Muchos de los Hispanos no piensan en quedarse aquí en los Estados Unidos por, por largo tiempo. Ellos piensan venir a trabajar, juntar un poco de dinero y regresarse. Y muchas de las veces esas ideas te perjudican, esas ideas te perjudican, por la razón de que no te están motivando a ti mismo de hacer cosas en un periodo largo, estas haciendo todo no más hoy y mañana y pasado mañana—pues Dios dirá. Y nunca hechar raíces así. En cambio, si tu dices bueno pues voy a vivir aquí hasta que...que sienta que ya puedo retirarme entonces puedes regresar. Pero mucha gente piensa que lo que ellos quieren es regresar par atrás lo más pronto.”

[Many of the Hispanics don’t think about staying here in the United States for, for a long time. They think they will come to work, gather a little more and go back. And many times these attitudes hurt you for the reason that it doesn’t motivate you to do things long term, you are doing everything only today and tomorrow]
and the day after tomorrow—well God will say. And never putting down roots here. On the other hand, if you say ok, well I will live here until...I feel that I can already retire and then you can go back. But many people think that what they want is to go back as soon as possible].

PJL explained how his personal attitude changed through a slow and gradual process, resulting from a constant evaluation of his own life in the U.S., comparing it to life in Mexico. He felt that eventually, one decides to stay in the U.S. because of the benefits and opportunities available in this country compared to one’s homeland. This attitude is not uncommon among Mexican immigrants and has been documented in previous studies (Young, 2003). One may initially enter the U.S. with the intention of accumulating funds and returning to Mexico. However, with time, and sometimes the establishment of a family, the return date is postponed if not forgotten all together. Circular migration into the U.S. is common among Mexican nationals. Such migration is usually perceived as temporary and therefore reduces the motivation to acquire skills necessary for acculturation into American society (Bohon, 2001). As a result, the focus of many Mexican immigrants tends to be on maximizing income and returning home, sometimes by working two jobs. A line position, which can offer opportunities for overtime, may be perceived as a way to maximize earnings with the minimal necessary time input, and allow one to have a second job as well.

This attitude may influence one’s desire to invest time and effort in English language acquisition or professional development, because current obligations take center stage. This message was conveyed by FG, a male house man, who expressed regret for
not having taken the time to study English and obtain his professional certification when he first came to the United States as a young man.

“No porque, cuando ya, nunca sabe, no tiene tiempo para, para esas cosas, porque ....mucho tiempo para estudiar y ir a la escuela, y con niños, lo tiene uno que cuidar y llevarles al doctor, y ir, mandar a traer comida, llevarlos al parque, o algo, todo el tiempo. Entonces ya no hay tiempo para eso. Esas cosas hay que hacerlas cuando es uno soltero, cuando hay tiempo. Ahora es too late” (FG, a male house man).

[No because, when, you never know, you don’t have time for, for these things, because....time consuming to study and go to school, and with kids, one has to watch them and take them to the doctor, and go, go to get food, take them to the park, or something, all the time. So one doesn’t have time for this. These things you have to do them when you are single, when you have time. Now it’s too late].

Similarly, RME, a female housekeeper, explained the chain of events that prevented her from investing time and energy into English language acquisition, which she perceived as necessary for occupations progress:

“Bueno, como yo en el idioma, que no lo hablo bien. Entiendo muy poco, me entiende? A veces, a veces uno no va a la escuela porque pues, uno llega a trabajar es lo que quiere uno—verdad ?! Trabajar, y despues pues no pasa, uno compara su casa y los biles y eso, osea. Yo se que es culpa de uno también, porque uno no trata de hacerlo—verdad?! Pero a veces también no hay chance de
ir a la escuela. Entonces uno trata de aprender Inglés en la casa, osea, como se puede” (RME, female housekeeper).

[Well, like me with the language, that I don’t speak it well. I understand very little, do you understand me? Sometimes, sometimes one does not go to school because, well, one comes to work, that is what one wants—right?! To work, and then it doesn’t happen. One buys a house and the bills and all that, I mean. I know that it’s one’s own fault as well, because one doesn’t try to do it—right?! But sometimes there’s no chance to go to school either. So one tries to learn English at home. I mean, you do what you can].

Present time orientation and financial obligations may increase the focus on the present, limiting the desire to pursue career progression and/or the desire to acquire new skills which may render the individual more promotable.

Fatalismo

Fatalism emphasizes external locus of control and could lead to passivity, promoting a sense of helplessness in individuals to a degree that taking a proactive orientation may appear futile (Guzman, 2001). Five of the seventeen interviewees explained that they did not think of changing their jobs and simply accepted their current situation even though some of them specifically stated their current job was not what they wanted to do. This passive approach could possibly stem from a perceived lack of opportunities available to immigrants, but it could also stem from a fatalistic approach to life in general. Ulibarri (1971) identified a ‘fatalistic attitude’ among Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants working in the U.S., who accepted poverty and the limited opportunities available to them as a given.
Powerlessness, or lack of control over one’s life, emerged as a stressor for nine of the interviewees. They expressed frustration about the lack of control over their work lives in terms of job security, scheduling, and other work-related issues. For example, FG, a male house man, spoke at length about the frustration he felt for not being able to secure the same schedule as his wife even though they have both been employed at the same place, she for fifteen years and he for thirteen years. GE, a female server assistant, spoke of the frustration of having to take her lunch break when her supervisor told her to (namely when the restaurant was slow) and not when she was hungry. She felt this was especially difficult because it usually occurred during the first hour of her eight-hour shift. SE, a female housekeeper expressed anger at not being able to ask for a day off when the casino was busy, even if she asked for it in advance. SE and RME, two female housekeepers, felt frustration over their inability to do anything when their transfer requests were denied.

Four interviewees spoke of the powerlessness they felt when dealing with their managers. This was not only because of the feeling that the manager would not listen, as stated by FG, a male house man: “Me siento que no va a hacer caso, ya quando voy, ya se que no.” [I feel like he will not pay attention to me, already when I go, I already know that [the answer will be] “No”]. Another concern was managerial retaliation if one complained or stood up for oneself at work. These individuals stressed the fact that they feared to stand up for themselves because they did not want to jeopardize their jobs. Three of these individuals spoke of differences across ethnic groups in terms of the interaction with managers. They felt that, compared with White or African American employees, Latinos were less likely to stand up for themselves. This seems to further
indicate perceptions of holding a lower status in U.S. society, with lesser rights compared to other groups. Such predicaments may significantly increase one’s perceived powerlessness, clearly apparent in the following statements:

- “No queremos perder el trabajo...porque no es tan fácil encontrar un trabajo....Por eso uno a veces también se debe uno de aguantar muchas cosas, y mejor quedarse callado....Uno como no quiere uno perder su trabajo,...uno ya lo que diga el supervisor, hay que hacerlo” (PF, female dishwasher).
[We don’t want to lose the job...because it is not so easy to find a job....That’s why sometimes one has to put up with a lot of things, and better keep quiet....Because one does not want to lose one’s job,...what the supervisor says one already has to do it].

- “Porque saben supuestamente, ellos dicen que un ciudadano o un Americano tiene más derechos que un Hispano. Entonces como que ellos ya miran de otra manera. Y pues no se, osea, tal vez será que ellos no, no se quieren meter con la gente que ellos saben que se va a defender. Que con otra gente que a lo mejor por miedo, que me pueden quitar mi residencia, me pueden quitar el permiso si voy a una corte o algo, hay mucha gente que tiene así miedo. Y ellos, tal vez el miedo de esta persona de otra pesona les hace ir más, no molestar” (SE, female housekeeper).
[Because [management] knows, they say that a citizen or an American has more rights than a Hispanic. So they already see you in a different way. And well, I don’t know, maybe it’s that they don’t, they don’t want to get involved with the people who they know will defend themselves. That with other people because of
the fear, that they can take away my residency, they can take away my work permit if I go to court or something, there are a lot of people who are afraid this way. And they, maybe the fear of this person or the other person makes them be more, without saying anything].

- "A un Latino lo corren mas facil y a un Americano no tan facil porque el Americano tiene mas... facilidades de estar aqui, pone mas pleitos...[el Latino] no sabe las leyes, no sabe uno como pueden ayudarse mas...y luego por lo mismo del idioma que no podemos...comunicarse bien, y pues el Americano y el Moreno ellos tienen mas, porque ellos hablan bien el idioma, tienen mas conocimientos de las leyes aqui, van por un lado van para otro. Es mas facil para ellos" (PR, male dishwasher).

[A Latino is fired more easily and an American not that easily because the American has more...ease to be here, he complains more....[the Latino] does not know the laws, one does not know how to help oneself more...and also for the language that we can not...communicate well, and well, the American and the African American they have more, because they speak the language well, they have more knowledge of the laws here, they go to one place and another place. It's easier for them].

These perceptions of low status combined with feelings of powerlessness could potentially drive passivity among Mexican immigrants. As a result, individuals may tend to accept their current state and not desire anything different. The passivity and resignation of some of the interviewees can be clearly identified in the following statements:
[There is no point in trying to change jobs because] “it’s kind of like a, a game that, well I don’t know if you could call that a game, but it just feels like everywhere you go it’s gonna be the same. Eventually you gonna get somebody, a supervisor who you don’t get along with, and you gonna have, especially in my line of work” (SJ, male food server).

- “No hago en lo que quisiera trabajar pero que importa?...Mejor me quedo allí donde estoy...allí estamos y allí nos quedamos” (FG, male house man). [I don’t do what I would want for work but what does it matter?...It’s better to stay where I am...there we are and there we stay].

- “Donde te pongan allí vas a trabajar...el tiempo pasa y uno pasa con el tiempo” (GE, female server assistant). [Where they put you there you will work...time passes and one passes with time].

These comments clearly demonstrate an acceptance of one’s sort and a lack of desire to try to change it. Similarly, Martinez (2002), found that many immigrants feel powerless and therefore do not attempt to improve their situation—they tend to accept their life as it is and “lack the motivation to make changes” (p. 10).

Possibly, because some Mexican immigrants see work as something that must be done but does not necessarily need to be personally fulfilling or enjoyable, they do not seek job changes. The following excerpts convey the attitude of perceiving work as a necessary evil:

- “Sobrellevar el día, si me entiendes? Osea, esperar que pase el día” (GE, female server assistant). [Survive the day, you understand? I mean, wait for the day to go by].

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“Es que tenemos que trabajar, por eso se llama trabajo” (PF, female dishwasher).
[It's that we have to work, that is why it's called work].

“Este trabajo, yo creo que a nadie, a nadie le gusta...pero pues, uno tiene que trabajar” (RME, female housekeeper).
[This work, I think that no one, no body likes it...but well, one has to work].

“No es un ambiente muy amicable...Pero no importa...simplemente queremos trabajar y ya, trabajar y ya, son las horas que pasamos alla y vamos a casa” (FG, male houseman). [It's not an amicable atmosphere...But what does it matter, we just want to work and that's it, work and that's it, these are the hours we spend there and then we go home].

Others also identified Mexicans’ perception of work as a ‘necessary evil’ and not necessarily something to be enjoyed (Pelled & Xin, 1997). While in the U.S. work is seen as “inherently good in and of itself...[Mexicans usually view work] as a means to an end rather than an end in itself” (Pelled & Xin, 1997, p. 187). As Nolan et al. (1994) observed:

“Mexicans generally approach work as a necessary evil that must be submitted to in order to enjoy the more important things in life—family, friends, and other earthly pleasures for which work provides the wherewithal. Those who are too eager to spend long hours at work or overly preoccupied about their careers...are perceived as being a bit odd and outside the accepted norm” (p. 238).

Similar attitudes have also been identified among low acculturated Asian Americans who viewed their careers as a means to an end (such as financial security) rather than as a virtue in and of itself (Leong & Serafica, 2001). Such an outlook may influence the
desire for upward mobility. If work is not seen as something that should be enjoyed, what one does for a living is not as important as it may be for an individual who sees work as an end in itself—which is the typical approach to work in North American culture.

Summary

This chapter discussed the variables which influence individual desire to pursue career progression. These variables determine whether one will desire to pursue upward mobility even before any action is taken to actually obtain a job change. They include human capital, predominantly language skills and educational attainment, self-concept, ethnic identity and cultural values. Given the importance of self-concept in career progression theories, the relationship between human capital and self-concept was also discussed. Ethnic identity was presented and ways of coping with a negative ethnic identity were examined in terms of their influence of upward mobility. For example, wishing to differentiate oneself from negative stereotypes associated to Mexican immigrants could possibly be achieved by obtaining higher status occupations. On the other hand, focusing on the positive characteristics of one’s group—such as the identity of the hard worker—could limit desires for upward mobility based on cognitive dissonance. Finally, cultural values have been discussed, showing how they may influence the desire to pursue upward mobility in various ways both promoting and suppressing it. These cultural values include simpatía, high uncertainty avoidance, familialism, present time orientation, and fatalismo.
Once an individual has decided he or she wishes to become upwardly mobile, he or she may actively pursue this goal. In Chapter Five, I discuss the moderating variables acting as drivers and/or barriers to the actual pursuit of upward mobility. These variables may either act to promote action or suppress it and include cultural values, individual variables, environmental and organizational factors as well as job specific characteristics (of the current position and the target position).
CHAPTER FIVE

BARRIERS AND DRIVERS IN THE PURSUIT
OF UPWARD MOBILITY

Introduction

In Chapter Four, I discussed the drivers and barriers for the desire of becoming upwardly mobile. Once an individual decides he or she would like to change jobs and move up, certain variables may still prevent that person from acting on this desire and actively pursuing a promotion. These moderating variables are the focus of this chapter. They may be inherent to the person and/or the environment. Individual variables include human capital (namely—does one possess the necessary skills for a job transfer), self-concept, ethnic identity, and cultural factors. Environmental factors include the job market, the organizational climate, and job specific characteristics. These environmental variables are important to consider when studying career progression because of their possible interaction with individual variables to further influence the pursuit of upward mobility. Every component of the model discussed here will be supported by data from the conducted interviews and the relevant literature. The model itself will be presented in Chapter Six, as part of the discussion and summary.
The most frequently mentioned barrier to pursuing a job change among the interviewees in my study was limited English proficiency. This concern was voiced by eleven of the seventeen interviewees. These individuals felt that their limited English skills prevented them from moving into better jobs because English proficiency is a basic job requirement. MM, a female utility porter, stated that in order to obtain a promotion “neccesita uno saber escribir en Inglés, saberlo leer bien, por eso yo no—nunca.” [One needs to know to write in English and to read it well, that’s why I will not—never]. MV, a female server assistant, also identified the lack of English skills as the main barrier for not seeking a promotion. She felt that any job was preferable to being a server assistant and that as soon as she was able to improve her English skills she would change jobs. In her own words:

“Porque si yo empiezo a saber más Inglés y yo se bien leer Inglés y escribir Inglés—hasta crees que yo me voy a segir quedando allí de ayudante de mesero? No! Yo no! Acabando tu cuerpo para agarrar el dinero?! Este, entonces cualquier posibilidad es mejor de estar allí” (MV, female server assistant).

[Because if I start knowing more English and I will know how to read and write English—do you think I will continue there as a server assistant? No! Not me! Hurting your body to get the money?! I mean, any possibility is better than being there].

Similarly, SE, a female housekeeper, put it in very straight forward terms: “Si no hablas Inglés, no pasas la entrevista y no hay trabajo.” [If you don’t speak English, you don’t pass the interview and there’s no work]. Others have also identified human capital
components as central to career progression among Hispanics. For example, Goldberg (1997) stated that "low education and skill levels with which Hispanic immigrants arrive in this country [are important] but the most critical barrier to immigrants’ success is language" (p. A16).

The language barrier also prevented some from putting their educational credentials to use. FG, a male house man, worked as an electrician in Mexico, but unable to transfer his credentials to the U.S., nor pass the necessary certification, because he did not possess strong English language skills, could not work in his profession.

"Yo, en mi país era electricista, y aquí, este...no tuve la oportunidad de ir a desarrollar el trabajo, y este, pense ir a la escuela pero tengo muchos hijos y no tuve tiempo de ir a la escuela. Entonces sigo en lo mismo...un trabajo como de electricista ya necesito, lo que yo estudie en México no me lo valoran aquí." [Me, in my country, I was an electrician, and here, I mean...I didn’t have the opportunity to go to school. So I continue doing the same thing...a job as an electrician I will already need, what I studied in Mexico is not recognized here].

This downward movement in occupational status could have serious outcomes for self-concept. For example, ES, a female cook, spoke of the frustration of having to do low-status jobs after having worked as a bank employee in Mexico. "Se siente frustrado, si, uno se frustra porque así, pues si, el, la barrera es el Inglés. Si no habla Inglés no se puede empeñar en lo que usted hacía en México, es muy frustrante." [You feel frustrated, yes, one gets frustrated because like that, well, the, the barrier is the English language. If you don’t speak English you can’t do what you did in Mexico, it’s very frustrating]. As mentioned in Chapter Four, it appears that the language barrier may—by imposing
occupational choices—influence the formation of the self-concept. One may perceive limited ability to apply educational and other qualifications to the U.S. labor market because of limited English skills. In addition, being forced to take lower status positions may also influence self-concept formation, because self-concept is shaped by status (Gottfredson, 2002; Tokar et al., 2003). The degree to which one dominates the English language then, is related to upward mobility directly, when English is a job requirement, and also indirectly, by shaping self-concept.

Educational attainment was also identified by several of the interviewees as a barrier to upward mobility. For example, GE, a female server assistant who held a Mexican high school diploma, felt that those who have an education have access to better work opportunities.

"Lo mejor sería tener un estudio, y trabajar en una oficina, donde puede uno estar sentado. Porque entre más estudia la persona pues mejores trabajos tiene y más le pagan y menos se cansa."

[The best thing would be to have studied, and to work in an office, where you can be seated. Because the more a person has studied, the better jobs she has and the more she is paid and gets less tired].

Similar perceptions were also identified in a study investigating occupational progress for low-income women. These women felt that higher educational attainment would always translate into higher occupational status and earnings (Bullock & Limbert, 2003). Indeed, in today’s world the link between education and occupational attainment has been clearly established as upward mobility is determined increasingly by possessing a college education (Bernstein, 2003).
Education can be clearly identified as moderating the relationship between the desire and actual pursuit of upward mobility in words of RME, a female housekeeper. Even though she would have liked to do a different type of work, RME felt she could not do so because she completed primary school only. “Yo no tuve un estudio. No tuve ningún estudio para trabajar en otra cosa. Pues empecé a trabajar en esto.” [I didn’t have schooling. I did not have any schooling to work in something else. So I started doing this]. She, however, took some comfort in the fact that her children would have a better future, and become professionals.

“Bueno uno vive aqui, osea, se viene a vivir aka pensando que sus hijos tendrán un futuro mejor—verdad?! Que uno va a vivir bien a luchar para que sus hijos tengan un futuro mejor, sean profesionales, y a que uno no pudo—verdad ?! Entonces uno piensa en sus hijos que hojala ....algun día” (RME, a female housekeeper).

[Well, one lives here, I mean, one comes to live here thinking about one’s children, so they can have a better future—right?! That one will live well and struggle so that one’s children will have a better future, be professionals, something that one was unable to do—right?! So one thinks about one’s children that, I hope…one day].

The impact of holding low status occupations can be seen in the PM’s words. PM, a female housekeeper, felt trapped in a low status position due to a lack of English skills. This angered her because she felt that many people judged her by the job she did rather than the quality of her work:
“Hay gente que no mira el trabajo que está haciendo uno, si no que piensan que el nivel es más importante. Pero yo pienso que todo es buen trabajo si uno le pone las ganas, este, que tiene uno que ponerle. Porque, como nosotros así que limpiamos cuartos a veces hay gente que opina: “Ay, limpias cuartos?” (Imitating voice of disdain or pity). Entonces hace a uno decir: “Si, los limpio!” Porque es un trabajo honrado, es un trabajo decente” (PM, a female housekeeper).

[There are people who don’t look at the work you do, but they think that the level is more important. But I think that any job is a good job if one wants to do it well, I mean, that one has to want to do it well. Because, like us, we clean rooms and sometimes there are people who say “Oh, you clean rooms?” (Imitating voice of disdain or pity). So one tells them: “Yes, I clean them!” Because it is an honorable job].

In summary, this section has demonstrated the concerns Mexican immigrants have because of their low educational attainment, difficulties in English acquisition, and/or having to work in low-status positions because of the inability to transfer credentials to the U.S. labor market. These variables (perceived ability and perceived status) have been linked to self-concept formation—a variable shown to be instrumental in the pursuit of career progression. Therefore, it appears that human capital variables act to moderate the relationship between the desire to and actual pursuit of upward mobility in two ways: directly and indirectly. First, because English language proficiency and/or educational attainment are required for upward mobility, lack thereof may trap the individual in low status positions with limited alternatives. Those who do not possess the necessary skills may be reluctant to pursue a higher level job, even if they desire to have
one. Second, human capital variables can influence the formation of self-concept (by influencing perceived ability), which is a key component in several career theories (e.g., Gottfredson, 2002; Super, 1991).

**Self Concept**

Self-concept is defined as the way the individual views him or herself both publicly and privately. It is shaped by personal appearance, abilities, values, social status, gender, and personality (Gottfredson, 2002). Ethnic identity which, because of societal discrimination and oppression, often becomes a salient domain of the individual’s overall ego and personality (Phinney, 1990) plays an important part of the self-concept for ethnic group members as well (Tajfel, 1981). As demonstrated above, some variables in the lives of immigrants can negatively influence the formation of individual self-concept. Perceived ability, however, could also be positively influenced when one has co-ethnic role models to look up to. Some interviewees spoke of the success of other Latinos/as as a motivator to pursue upward mobility. Indeed, Blanton, Crocker, and Miller (2000) stressed the importance of having in-group or co-ethnic role models to look up to in the formation of feelings about self. For example, PJL, a male bartender, felt satisfaction in the fact that co-ethnic peers were assuming central roles in the United States. He said:

“Me satisface mucho que haya más Hispanos y que los Hispanos, pues, más que todo sobresalgan de... últimamente se han mirado Hispanos en hasta la política también. Y eso como qué, te hace sentir mejor—verdad?! Que alguien de tu propia raza lo está haciendo.”
It satisfies me that there are more Hispanics and that the Hispanics, well, more than anything that they make it...recently we have seen Hispanics go all the way into politics. And this, like, it makes you feel better—right?! That someone from your own race has made it.

Positive feelings were also expressed because individuals felt that the growth of the Hispanic community forced others to recognize its importance and the contribution of Hispanics to the country. For example, DTY, a female server assistant proudly stated that:

“Estamos dandonos a conocer más...estamos logrando a introducir nuestra cultura, nuestras ideas....la gente Hispana se está involucrando bastante...en el avance, en el desarrollo de este país.”

[Other people are getting to know us...We have managed to introduce our culture, our ideas...The Hispanic people are becoming involved...in the advancement, in the development of this country].

Similarly, PM, a female housekeeper felt satisfaction from the fact that “Los blancos me están tomando en cuenta como Latina.” [The Whites are taking me into consideration as a Latina]. This perceived strength in numbers, so to speak, and the availability of role models, could enhance the perception of ability. This would contribute to the strengthening of self-concept and possibly encourage the pursuit of upward mobility. Additional research would be necessary to determine which force is stronger—the positive forces or perceived strength and exposure to other successful Latinos or negative forces related to limited perceived ability because of the language barrier and low education attainment and lack of role models in one’s immediate environment. However,
the significant under-representation of Hispanics in higher status positions (Elliott & Smith, 2001) appears to answer that question.

**Stress**

As a minority group, Hispanics experience many challenges in adapting to life in the United States. These feelings became clear in comments such as: “Aqui vivimos tristes” (FG, male house man) [Here we live sad], or “Es pesado el cambio de vida” (GE, female server assistant) [The change of life is a heavy load] or feelings of not belonging. For example, after having lived in the U.S. for over 12 years, ES, a female cook, said she still thought of returning to Mexico because she would never be able to adapt to life in the United States. “Me siento todavía extraña, es que ya no me puedo adaptar, yo digo que si un día yo tengo la oportunidad de regresar a México, yo regreso.” [I still feel a stranger, it’s that I can not adapt, I say that if one day I have the opportunity to go back to Mexico I will go back].

Five interviewees spoke of the difficulty of being separated from their family as well as from their social network.

“Gran cambio para la gente que venimos de otro país...No conocemos a nadie... Si estuviera en mi país,...estuviera con mi familia, con mis papas” (GE, female server assistant).

[A big change for us, the people who come from another country...We don’t know anyone...If I was in my country,...I would be with my family, with my parents].
As mentioned in Chapter Two, the family plays an important role in Mexican culture and individuals often live in extended family households. Having to adapt to a new country, language and customs, while at the same time being separated from the supportive family unit, can contribute to feelings of distress and discomfort (Escobar, 1998).

Two of the female interviewees spoke of the stress associated with the breakdown of the family unit and family values. ES, a female cook, saw the U.S.—and Las Vegas especially—as a problematic place to raise children because of the excessive freedoms. Similarly, GE expressed concern regarding her children’s behaviors, having been raised in the U.S.:

“La diferencia de cultura, bueno, en cuanto de la educación de los hijos, allá los hijos son más, este, los hijos son más, lo siento como si son más educados. Más respectuosos antes la sociedad, antes las personas mayores...Aquí los niños siempre quieren te piden más y más y quieren más. Y como uno les compre y todo, y allá si un niño que no tiene, le regalas un juguete, Oh! Se pone contentísimo, osea, es más agradecido. Osea, valoran más las cosas. Y aquí como no, este, no tratan de ver el sacrificio que uno hace, ...ellos quieren más”

(GE, female server assistant).

[The difference in culture, well, in what concerns the children’s education. There the children are more, the children are more, I feel like they are better behaved. More respectful towards society, toward adults...Here the children always want. They ask you more and more and they want more. And because one buys for them and all that. While there, if a child who doesn’t have, you give him a present of a toy, oh! He becomes very happy, I mean, very grateful. I mean, they
appreciate things more. And here, like not, I mean, they don’t try to see the
sacrifice that one does...they want more].

The shift in one’s employment circumstances can also prove difficult to adapt to
when one comes to the United States. “Most Mexican-origin workers in this country are
“campesinos,” farm workers brought up in rural areas” (Deforest, 1994, p. 44). For
example, PR, a male dishwasher, felt that the change from being a farm worker who
made his own schedule to becoming an employee in a large organization was difficult.
He felt dissatisfaction with the fact that one could often not take a day off for family
events such as a child’s birthday. In Mexico he said, “Trabaja uno, pero con menos
presion.” [One works, but with less pressure].

Five other individuals explained that life was more stressful in the U.S. due to
increased financial obligations and less free time to dedicate to one’s family. Although
one is able to achieve a more comfortable life in America in the materialistic sense, this
achievement comes at a high price—namely added stress. The following statements
demonstrate these sentiments clearly:

- “Aquí queremos lujos y nos cuesta...quiero vivir yo más, según yo más bien, más
bien aparentemente pero en mi cabeza—los biles...mucha presión” (PF, female
dishwasher).

[Here we want luxuries and it costs us...I want to live more, according to me,
better, better in appearance only because in my head—the bills...a lot of
pressure].
• “Tienes que esforzarte para tener lo que tienes...hay muchas buenas oportunidades de trabajo, ganas mejor que en México, claro, pero tiene precio. Osea, no tienes todo el tiempo con tus hijos” (MV, female server assistant).

[You have to make an effort to have what you have...there are many good work opportunities, you earn better than in Mexico, of course, but it has a price. I mean, you don’t have all the time with your children].

• “Aquí cuando usted viene a trabajar no, no es como se lo platicavan en Mexico....Que llega uno a agarar los dolares, que es facil. Aquí no...sobre todo, este, aquí es trabajo, trabajo y queda poco para convivir con su familia” (ES, female Cook).

[Here when you come to work it’s not, it’s not like they told you in Mexico....That you arrive to get the dollars, that it’s easy. Here no...above all, well, here it’s work, work and you have little [time] left to spend with your family].

• “La forma de vivir es más cómoda pero hay que luchar para eso” (ST, male cook).

[The way of living is more convenient but you have to struggle for it].

It is possible that Mexican immigrants perceive life in the U.S. to be stressful enough without having to worry about the possible outcomes of a job change. A new job, even for a confident individual, represents some uncertainty and added stress while one is learning new tasks. When life is perceived to be highly stressful, a job change, even if it carries some positive results, may mean additional stress because it is associated with new relationships with co-workers and managers as well as new responsibilities. For example, GE, a female server assistant, perceived that the work of a server would be
more stressful because it required more guest contact and was more physically demanding. For these reasons upward mobility into a server's position was undesirable for her. Similarly, an individual who feels his or her life is already stressful, may not want to engage in any activities that may increase stress even further such as actively pursuing a promotion.

External Factors

Aside from variables inherent to the individual, some external factors can also influence one's decision making process of whether to pursue upward mobility. This can occur directly and through an interaction between external factors and individual variables. The external factors addressed here include the local economy and job market and the organizational climate. An individual may desire to pursue upward mobility but refrain from doing so because of one or both of these factors. In the following, I describe in detail how this process occurs and how environmental factors interact with individual variables, such as cultural values and self-concept, to moderate the relationships between the desire for and actual pursuit of upward mobility.

Local Job Market

The saturation in the job market was a concern for five interviewees who perceived that, at present, finding an alternative job would be difficult. “No queremos perder el trabajo...porque no es tan fácil encontrar un trabajo” (PF, female dishwasher). [We don’t want to lose the job...because it’s not that easy to find a job]. The perception that finding a new job would be very difficult, “like pulling teeth” (SJ, male food server), appeared to keep many individuals from changing positions. They were more concerned
with holding on to current jobs than with improving occupational status. Several mentioned the perception of being easily replaceable because their jobs required few skills. For example, SJ felt that “they can train somebody else to carry a tray, take orders.” GE, a female server assistant, also felt that her manager regarded her as easily replaceable. When GE’s coworker took a leave of absence because of an illness, their manager said “Ah…Esta bien, de esta gente tengo yo mucho!” [Oh, it’s ok, of these kinds of people I have many]. Four interviewees expressed a concern that the on-going population growth in the city reduced the number of available jobs. DTY, a female food server, felt that the labor market was becoming saturated and PR, a male dishwasher, said: “Es más difícil encontrar trabajo…hay que cuidar su trabajo más.” [It’s more difficult to find work…You have to watch your job more carefully].

These perceptions are interesting given the fact that unemployment is currently at 4.9% down from 5.6% a year ago (Smith Hubble, 2004) and hotels are reportedly struggling to recruit workers (Smith, 2004). While there has been a slight increase in unemployment since then, there is a shrinking pool of available labor for low-level, labor-intensive jobs (Rose, 1997). These types of jobs (low skilled to semi-skilled) have been on the rise in the U.S. since the mid 90s (Judy & D’Amico, 1997). Possibly, the rapid population growth occurring in the Las Vegas metropolitan area (Suro, 2002) which increases competition for jobs, contributes to the formation of these misperceptions. This is especially so regarding employment at local hotel-casinos, where all the interviewees in this study were employed. Employment in the Las Vegas hotel-casino industry is preferable for many immigrants and non-immigrants alike because of the pay and benefit plans associated with it. Because most of the major employers in the city are unionized,
most hotel workers earn a living wage and enjoy a generous benefits package. Such benefits and wages are usually not offered by smaller hotels or free standing restaurants. For this reason job security is a major concern for many of the immigrants working for one of the many casino-hotels in the city. The industry wide layoffs which occurred after September 11th (Greenhouse, 2001) are likely to have played a significant role in accentuating the perception that job security is at risk. However, the union contract can also serve as a limitation because the large majority of employment decisions are based on seniority. Changing jobs will lead to the loss of the seniority associated with the position which may pose a risk to job security.

The fear that a job change may result in reduced job security was voiced by several interviewees. For example, MV, a female server assistant, explained: “Me cambiaria pero como ahorita yo estoy estable allí, como yo se que en todas partes el trabajo está muy despacio... mucha gente no está trabajando.” [I would change [jobs] but because now I am stable there, and because I know that everywhere work is very slow right now...many people are not working]. The perception of the job market being saturated combined with the high level of uncertainty avoidance prevalent in Latin-American culture may prevent many who desire a job change from actively pursuing one. Mexican immigrants may chose not to pursue a new position because they are more concerned with holding on to the jobs they currently have, which are perceived as relatively secure based on their seniority and the union contract. This concern has been identified in past studies identifying job loss as one of the major stressors among Mexican-Americans, more than any other life event (Catalano & Aldrete, 2000). Having
job security was also mentioned as more important to Hispanic-American community college students than to White students (Teng, Morgan, & Anderson, 2001).

Organizational Climate and Culture

Several interviewees spoke about the organizational environment in which they worked and how that influenced their pursuit of upward mobility. For example, FG, a male house man stated:

“Ahí no hay, solamente el trabajo que le dan a uno y ya, no hay más, no le ascienden a uno, no nos ascienden, estamos en una parte, no podemos ir a otra parte mejor.” [There, there is no, only the work they give you; there is nothing else. They don’t promote you. They don’t promote us. We are in one area. We can’t go to another, better area].

Furthermore, SJ, a male food server, felt that in his organization, internal transfer opportunities were posted only for the sake of appearances and not because management really wanted employees to progress.

“They don’t really emphasize too much on that. Again, because then you would be in their little league, you know, so it’s not, it’s like I guess it’s more political. They ask them to send those memos out, and they did it but it’s not, they don’t encourage you to” (SJ, male food server).

These statements appear to indicate that the organizational environment can be a factor in the decision to pursue upward mobility.

This seems to be related to Merton’s (1968) theory of adaptive behavior. This theory indicates a link between the organizational environment and employee expectations, stating that individual expectations and aspirations are psychological
adaptations to socially structured opportunities. Similar to the concept of leveled aspirations presented in Chapter Four, when opportunities are limited, attitudes towards upward mobility will be adjusted. Harlan (1989) found that, in the context of scarce opportunities, individuals adopted an “anti-mobility subculture” (p. 782). He identified this attitude among line employees in a manufacturing plant. This attitude

"seemed to insulate or protect immobile workers from the organization’s success ideology by fostering the development of attitudes which rationalized their lack of mobility. In this way, workers with low positional opportunity are able to disengage from the dominant organizational culture by lowering their expectations and aspirations for promotion” (Harlan, 1989, p. 782).

Possibly, Hispanic immigrants who perceive that promotion opportunities are not available to them, change their attitudes towards upward mobility, devaluing it and becoming less likely to pursue it.

The things that are valued and supported in an organization are determined to a great extent by organizational culture. A culture that is focused on employee welfare and growth would guide the behaviors of managers and employees alike. A supportive organization could, for example, offer training opportunities or tuition reimbursement programs to encourage and empower employees to become upwardly mobile. The two above quoted interviewees (SJ and FG), however, felt that their organizations were not interested in increasing upward mobility among Hispanic employees. In fact, some “employers...see Hispanic immigrants, particularly those who speak poor English, as disposable workers” (Goldberg, 1997, p. A16) and are therefore not likely to invest any time and/or effort in supporting their growth.
Immigrants and ethnic minorities tend to be concentrated in low-status jobs, often referred to as “dead-end” jobs out of which it is difficult to progress. A “dead-end” job, or what Harlan (1989) refers to as a low-opportunity job, offers limited learning opportunities that could later serve as a tool for upward mobility, which makes it a terminal one—a job from which one will never advance (Goldberg, 1997). This is also referred to as the “status closure” process (Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993) in which racial biases are tied to the hiring process. Tomaskovic-Devey (1999) found that employers tended to hire African Americans and Whites into low-level jobs at similar rates but gave Whites machine-operating jobs and African Americans physical labor jobs. The machine operation jobs prepared workers for advanced levels, allowing Whites to gain experience and skills needed to advance while African Americans did not. A similar situation could be occurring in the hospitality industry where immigrants are channeled into back-of-the-house positions and rarely into front-of-the-house positions. This may lead Mexican immigrants to become caught in jobs that offer limited, if any, opportunities to accumulate new skills and enhance promotability.

The term “social closure,” first introduced by Max Weber (1968), identifies “the process by which social collectivities seek to maximize rewards by restricting access to resources and opportunities to a limited circle of eligibles” (Elliott & Smith, 2001, p. 259). This perpetuates stratification among groups. A similar term—“homosocial reproduction”—was later introduced by Kanter (1977), identifying a similar scenario in which the higher status group retained opportunities for individuals of its in-group, excluding out-group members. While Kanter (1977) spoke of exclusion by gender, her ideas are applicable to minority groups as well. Interviewees in my study did not
specifically say that they felt they were not being promoted because of being Hispanic, but some seemed to hint at it. For example, in the above mentioned statement, FG, a male house man, felt that Hispanics can not obtain better jobs because they are not being promoted.

Two female housekeepers, SE and RME, expressed their frustration at having transfer requests (into higher status positions) denied without being given an explanation. Their statements seem to further indicate the perception among Hispanic immigrants that they are not being promoted.

- “Simplemente vas y les pides el transfer por otro lado y te dicen nada más: “Si no hablas Inglés no te puedes ir.” Y eso es todo, y no puedes hacer nada porque muchas veces, pues, como yo, entiendo muchas palabras y todo—verdad?! Pero no hablo el Inglés que ellos requieren para poder cambiarse por otro lado. Entonces allí se tiene que quedar uno. Es lo que, para nosotros no hay mucho apoyo, que digamos para un cambio o algo, no hay....No, porque, pues, a veces digo, bueno, si no me quieren dar el cambio, ya” (SE, female housekeeper).

[You simply go and ask them for the transfer to another place and they tell you only: “If you don’t speak English you can’t go.” And that’s it, and you can’t do anything because many times, well, like me, I understand many words and all—right?! But I don’t speak English at the level they require to be able to change jobs to another place. So one has to stay there. That’s what, for us there isn’t much support, that we could say for a job change or something, there’s none....No, because, well, sometimes I say, ok, if they don’t want to give the transfer, enough already.]
“He pensado de tratar de cambiarme, he puesto, como se llama, este, transfer, pero no me dejaron, me los han negado. Lo he hecho pero no, me los han negado. Entonces, este, pues, uno no más espera que un día se va a cambiar uno—verdad?!...no me han explicado porque me lo negaron, solamente ellos dicen que es el otro que no está agarrando gente, pero nosotros vemos que llega gente de afuera, gente de afuera que no está trabajando allí, gente nueva. Entonces, y a uno no le dan las oportunidades de cambiarse. Pues se siente uno mal, porque, osea, se siente uno discriminado, me entiende?! Porque a uno, pues uno quisiera amejarar—verdad?! Pero en ese aspecto no le dan a uno el caso, y que vas hacer—esperar, y tratar de hacer el trabajo” (RME, female housekeeper).

[I thought of trying to change, I put in, what do you call it, a transfer request, but they didn’t let me, they denied them. I did it but no, they denied them. So, I mean, well, one can only wait that one day one will change jobs—right?!...they did not explain to me why they denied me, they only say that it’s the other one [department] who’s not hiring people, but we see that people from outside are arriving, people from outside who don’t work there, new people. So, and one isn’t given the opportunity to change. Well one feels bad, because, I mean one feels discriminated against, do you understand me?! Because one, well one wants to improve—right?! But in this aspect they don’t pay attention to you, and what will you do—wait, and try to do the work].

Finally, the lack of Hispanic individuals in managerial and higher level positions within the hospitality industry, could contribute to the perception that Latinos are not
promoted. This was stated by SJ, a food server, who expressed concern over the fact that there were no Hispanics in top positions in his workplace.

"I don’t feel that we have enough, the Latino community does not have enough upper management positions. When you look at the, cause we have a hallway, or, where we have [pictures of] people of upper management. I’m talking about the big shots. You don’t see any Latinos there [among] the big executives, the president of the hotel, the vice president. I can’t think of a lot of titles that they have but basically you don’t see many Latinos" (SJ, male food server).

The lack of Hispanics in key positions deprives Hispanic line employees of a role model to look up to. Because of

the dominance of White European Americans within the occupational structure in the United States, particularly in the higher authority positions, racial and ethnic minorities do not have the same experience of role models and mentors in schools and in the workplace (Leong & Serafica, 2001, p. 198).

Research with African American college students has exposed the importance of having role models for individual optimism and future performance. Blanton, Crocker, and Miller (2000) found that “upward comparison can lead individuals to be more optimistic about their own level of competence [because] people can look to members of meaningful in-groups as a source of self-esteem in the context of a negative stereotype” (p. 528). The presence of co-ethnic role models, they say, can contribute to reducing the anxiety associated with the “stereotype threat...[which is] the social anxiety brought on by feeling personally responsible for disconfirming negative group stereotypes” (Blanton, Crocker, & Miller, 2000, p. 528). Mexican immigrants who are faced with negative
stereotypes about their group (Buriel & Vasquez, 1982) may therefore benefit from having co-ethnic role models to help them confront the anxiety associated with the stereotypes.

**Leadership.**

Two interviewees described the supportive environment in which they worked and explained how this encouraged them to pursue upward mobility. They spoke of the way in which having a supportive manager drove employees to learn and grow into higher level positions. DTY, a female food server, considered herself as exceptionally lucky for having an understanding and supportive manager:

"La verdad, me considero con mucha suerte porque tengo muy buenos compañeros, un jefe estupendo...Siempre nos ayuda bastante, nos orienta, nos, pues, nos dice como hay que hacer las cosas. Si uno lo hace mal el lo entiende siempre, este, no es que uno anda con miedo allí —Ay, que me van a regañar— No! Este, el sabe como hacerte ver de que las cosas no estuvo bien, que podria estar mejor, el, lo admiro bastante por su manera de llevar allí el control en este restauran....A él le gusta que la gente quiere superarse."

[The truth is I consider myself to be very lucky because I have very good co-workers, a great boss...He always helps us a lot, he orients us, well, he tells us how things have to be done. If you do it badly he always understands. I mean, you don’t walk around with fear: “Oh, they will reprimand me.” No! I mean, he knows how to make you see that things weren’t done well, that they could be better. He, I admire him very much for his way of managing and controlling the restaurant...He likes it when people want to move up]."
Similarly, ST, a male cook, spoke of how his manager encouraged him to learn new things and move into better positions:

"El fue el que me enseñó y que me dijo: "Un día tu puedes estar haciendo esto," y ahorita ya lo estoy haciendo. El me motivaba, más que nada el me motivaba, y yo también me sentía con ganas de aprender y con ganas de no defraudar a, defraudarle a él ni a la compañía" (ST, male cook).

[He was the one who taught me and told me—one day you can be doing this—and now I am doing it. He motivated me, more than anything he motivated me, and I also felt a desire to learn and a desire not to disappoint, disappoint him nor the company].

It appears that leader behaviors can act as a motivator to pursue upward mobility. Unfortunately, such positive experiences regarding managerial support were mentioned by only these two interviewees.

When asked what they thought their managers expected of them, nine interviewees felt that their managers’ expectations were for the employees to do nothing more than their work while maintaining good relationships with their peers. For example, PF, a female dishwasher, felt that what managers wanted is "que trabaje uno más, que saque uno más producción y que se lleve bien entre compañeros, así sale más pronto el trabajo." [That one should work more, to put out more production and to get along well among co-workers, that way the work is done faster].

ES, a female cook, felt that, when it came to the Mexican worker managers want to "exploatandolo lo maximimo, que se rinda, imprimirlo lo más que se pueda." [Exploit him to the max, make him give in, squeeze him as much as possible].
The belief that employee obedience was central to managerial expectations was also voiced by MM, a female utility porter. She saw herself as a good worker because:

"Cumplía con el trabajo, tal vez yo no, nunca agare los warnings, nunca agare suspesion, nunca agare nada de eso." [I completed the demands of the job, I mean, I never got warnings, never got a suspension, I never got any of these things].

Later in the interview she added:

"A ellos no les gusta que le digan a uno: "Necesito que vayas hacer este trabajo" y les diga "No! No es mio. No es mi sección, porque la voy a ur hacer?" No les gusta."

[They [the supervisors] don’t like it when they tell you “I need to do that job” and you say “No! It’s not mine, It’s not my section, why should I do it?” they don’t like that].

RME, a female housekeeper, even felt that managers wanted to keep immigrant employees from changing positions because they were doing undesirable jobs that are hard to fill: “Nosotros hacemos el trabajo más duro, entiende? Allí, por eso no quieren a uno dejarlo ir para otro lado.” [We do the hardest work, you see, there. This is why they don’t want to let you go somewhere else]. It appears that managerial encouragement, or lack thereof, may act as a moderator of the relationship between the desire to pursue upward mobility and one’s actual pursuit of a promotion. In addition, the perception that management desires to keep immigrant workers in low-status positions, as mentioned above by RME, may be a difficult barrier to surpass for many employees who desire to progress in terms of occupational status.
Communication.

Interpersonal communication with non co-ethnic individuals greatly depends on one’s language skills. As discussed earlier, the inability to communicate fully, beyond basic, daily work requirements, may negatively influence work relationships with one’s managers or peers and even with customers. Interpersonal interactions with one’s manager and/or supervisor were cited as a source of distress and concern—and possibly a barrier to upward mobility. Being ignored by one’s manager appeared to be especially disturbing. Feelings of being ignored could be accentuated because of the Hispanic cultural value of personalismo, when lack of interpersonal communication with one’s manager leads Mexican immigrant employees to perceive him or her as distant and even disinterested. Four interviewees described their interaction with supervisors as limited to work related information exchange or discipline, stating that at times they felt they were being ignored. These feelings are apparent in the following statements:

- “Ellos no andan personalmente con uno” [They don’t interact personally with you] (GE, Female bus-person).
- “No nos hablan...No es un ambiente amigable” [They don’t talk to us. It’s not a friendly atmosphere] (FG, male house man).
- “Como un padre no quiere a su hijo, se siente mal, se siente triste” [Like a father who doesn’t love his son, he feels badly, he feels sad] (FG, male house man).
- “He doesn’t let you communicate your feelings. He doesn’t let you. Yea, he just, he feels that you are a like a robot, you know like: “I tell you to do this and do it” (SJ, male food server).
• “No nos tomavan en cuenta para nada, nada más fuimos a trabajar y salimos y ya” [They didn’t take us into consideration for anything. We only went to work and we left and that was it] (PF, female dishwasher, describing her previous manager).

• No hay comunicación, no hay tiempo, puro trabajo” [There is not communication, there is not time, it’s purely work] (MA, female kitchen worker).

The above quoted statements also reveal feelings of isolation. These can be identified in the use of words such as: “we” and “us” versus “they” exposing the dichotomy some Hispanics perceive between themselves and other groups in American society. This language seems to reinforce the proposition that Hispanics feel isolated as a minority group.

PGM, a male cook, described his interaction with a previous manager, when working at a small casino-hotel, where personal interaction, however brief, was a source of comfort.

“En un casino chico el jefe conoce a todos, como somos pocos, ya nos conoce. Y él tiempo que el tiene, tiene tiempo para veinte personas, para saludarlos: ¿Cómo estás? De dónde eres? Y ya, con eso, con esos dos tres minutos, ya se siente uno bien.”

[In a small casino the boss knows everyone, as we were few, he knew us. And the time that he has, he had time for twenty people, to say hello to them: How are you? Where are you from? And already, with this, with these two, three minutes, already you feel good].
This statement seems to indicate the importance placed on feeling recognized, or even simply acknowledged, by one’s manager. PF, a female dishwasher, shared the satisfaction she felt with her new manager who was more respectful and caring than the one she worked with previously:

“Ahorita se ven las cosas bien. Nos hacen participar...sentimos que nos están tomando en cuenta. Nos hace meetings...nos hace rifas de regalos, quien trabaje más nos dan reconocimiento...nos hacen parties en el parque, cuando antes ni si quiera el otro jefe no nos, ni nos volteava a ver.”

[Now things look good. They make us participate...we feel that they are taking us into consideration. He does meetings for us...he raffles off presents. Those who work more are recognized...They organize parties for us in the park, whereas before the other boss didn’t, he didn’t even look at us].

On the other hand, PM, a female housekeeper, described the disappointment she felt from the impersonal treatment by her department. When PM took a position in a different property within the same company, her department did nothing to recognize her departure after six years of employment.

“Lo que ahorita me duele ami, que no, no me supieron respetar mi trabajo, mi esfuerzo, que no lo valoraron. Pues yo digo, que no me reciben...con flores o algo, pero que digan...“Maria sabes que—aqui es tu ultimo dia.” Nada, nada ni una llamada.”

[What hurts me now is that, no, they didn’t respect my work, my effort, that they didn’t value it. Well I say, they don’t need to give me flowers, or what ever, but...]

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they should say...“Maria, you know—it's your last day.” Nothing, nothing, not even a phone call].

In summary, the lack of managerial and organizational support appears to serve as a suppressor to the pursuit of upward mobility.

As discussed in Chapter Four, interpersonal relationships with peers can also act as barriers to upward mobility in that sanctions from peers can hurt one’s efforts to change jobs. While for some individuals such sanctions act on the very desire to pursue upward mobility, others who may desire a job change may hesitate to do so because of the possible reaction of their peer group. ES, a female cook, felt that co-ethnic peers were trying to prevent other Latinos from moving up:

“Lamentable, que nosotros mismos los Hispanos nos estemos jugando competencia, en lugar de ayudarnos a mejorar, a superarnos. No—en lugar de darnos las manos nos ponemos el pie a los Hispanos para que no suba.”

[Unfortunately, we as Hispanic are playing competition against each other, instead of helping each other to improve, to move up. No—instead of giving each other a helping hand we try to prevent other Hispanics from moving up].

EP, a male house man, reported similar reactions among co-ethnic peers who disapproved of his progression when it surpassed their own:

“La gente que llego primero que yo y no tuvo la manera de sobresalir a algo mejor, se sienten ofendidos....muy abajo. Quieren ponerte una pata encima. Y tu estas como aquella persona que va al gimnasio, levantado dos pesas al nivel de una, para sobresalir a tu vida. Y la otra, del envidio, te esta poniendo la pata encima para que no te levantes.”
[The people that arrived before me and did not have a way to make it, to have something better, they feel offended...very low. They want to step on you. And you are like that person in the gym, lifting two weights instead of one, to be able to make it in your life. And the other [person], because of jealousy, he tries to step on you so you won’t make it].

Competition among peers who were not Hispanic was also a concern, as stated by SJ, a male food server. He felt that his peers wanted him to stay in lower status positions: “As long as you do work for them, you’re a good Mexican or Latino”. These statements seem to indicate that there may be some undesirable reactions from within one’s peer group when upward mobility is pursued and/or obtained.

A possible explanation to co-ethnic competition lies in Tesser’s (1986, 1988) self-evaluation model. This model predicts that superior performance of in-group members should be threatening to one’s self-esteem when comparisons are made on ability demands that are relevant to self-esteem—such as work performance. He found that individuals felt diminished when they engaged in upward comparisons with in-group members, preferring downward comparison targets as a way of creating a positive contrast between the self and other (Tesser, 1988). Mexican immigrant employees may perceive a threat to their own self-evaluation when their co-ethnic peers grow and surpass them at work and for this reason, could be attempting to prevent them from doing so.

This concern was communicated by DTY, a food server, who said: “No creo que sea tan, tan agradable pues mirando que otros compañeors avanzan y tu estas quedando en lo mismo, años tras años tras años”. [I don’t think it’s so, so pleasant to see that other co-workers are moving ahead and you’re staying in the same position, year after year]. For
her, however, this served as a motivation to progress as well, as mentioned earlier, rather than to try to prevent others from moving up.

**Co-ethnic leadership.**

The interaction with one’s manager seemed to be an even greater source of concern when interviewees compared co-ethnic supervisors/managers to non-Hispanic supervisors/managers. Only three male respondents expressed a preference for working with a Latino/a supervisor, basing this preference on the ease of communication with a co-ethnic person. For example, PJL, a male bartender, felt that: “Con un supervisor Anglosajon, pues, quizas no se puede platicar tan abiertamente como con un Latino”.

SJ, a male food server, stated “I do feel more comfortable when he’s there...I feel more comfortable dealing with him.” On the other hand, seven of the remaining fourteen respondents reported having experienced problems, to different degrees, when working under the supervision of a co-ethnic person—problems that were not mentioned in relation to interactions with Anglo managers. This included the feeling that Latino/a supervisors pressured and pushed co-ethnic employees to do more work than other non-Latino employees, treated them with less respect, and tried to put them down—emphasizing the status and power differentials more than non-Hispanic supervisors/managers did. These following quotes provide some examples:

- “Los jefes Latinos se portan muy mal con los Latinos, y la gente Americana lo trata muy bien....El [supervisor] Americano no, ...no hace tanta presión como el Latino” (SE, female guest room attendant). [The Latino bosses behave badly with
the Latinos, and the American people treat them very well....The American supervisor doesn’t, doesn’t put as much pressure as the Latino.

- “Mucha gente [Latina] se agarra de su posición y quiere humillar a los de más abajo” (MV, female server assistant). [Many [Latino] people, based on their position, want to humiliate those in lower positions].

- “Porque [los Latinos] tienen uno, una posición más grande, ya quieren sentirse que es mejor que uno...lo sentí muy duro” (PM, female guest room attendant). [Because [Latinos] have a higher position they want to feel that they are better than you...it hurt me very much].

- “Si ellos estan arriba no quieren que uno suba” (PF, female dishwasher). [When they are up they don’t want one to move up].

- “El supervisor Latino es que lo hacia más!...yo he visto manejadores Latinos, es quien nos está...deprimiendo más !” (ES, female cook). [The Latino supervisor is the one who did it the most!...I saw Latino managers, they are the ones who...put us down the most!].

- “Te piden más trabajo a los Latinos, a su misma raza que a otra, otro tipo de raza que sea Blancos o Negros” (MV, female Server assistant). [They ask more work of you, of their own race, than of another, another type of race like the Whites or the African Americans].

Such behaviors could lie in the cultural value of high power distance, typical of Latin American cultures. Power distance refers to the degree to which the members of a society accept the unequal distribution of power in society (pluralist vs. elitist). Possibly, Hispanic supervisors and managers want to stress power differentials and maintain their
superior power position when interacting with their co-ethnic subordinates. This problematic relationship may prevent some from pursuing upward mobility into supervisory jobs if they fear that their co-ethnic managers, in order to preserve their status position, will use this opportunity—when the individual is not protected by the union contract—and terminate their employment.

Because values determine how we “experience, interpret, and react to social situations” (Guzman, 2001, p. 9) cultural values may influence Mexican immigrants’ interpretation of interactions at work. Latin American culture, being relationship based, may lead some to feel that personal relations with individuals in leadership positions are necessary to get ahead. This approach was identified in a statement made by PF, a female dishwasher. She felt that in order to gain a promotion into a position in the kitchen, one would need to “Solamente llevarte bien con el Chef para que le den a uno el cambio”. [Only get along with the Chef in order to receive the job change]. Similarly EP, a male house man, felt that in order to facilitate a transfer he would need to establish a relationship with the person in charge of approving transfer requests. “Quizas me falta conocimiento de las personas que mas, mas encargada de hacer los transfers”. [Maybe I lack familiarity with the people who are more, most in charge of making transfers].

Such attitudes seem to indicate that personal contacts are considered more important in securing a job transfer than ability and skill. When one is unable to establish such rapport, for whatever reason, the individual is less likely to pursue upward mobility because in his or her eyes, he or she lacks an essential component of promotability. In fact, Weaver (2000) found that Mexican-Americans were more likely to say that people get ahead by lucky breaks or help from other people than from hard work or from both
equally. This is not uncommon in a network culture in which “managers are selected on
the basis of family links, personal recommendations, and … [where] political pull [is
frequently used] in order to get things done or to secure special favors” (Webber, 1969, p.
372).

Job Specific Characteristics

When interviewees were asked what characteristics make a job desirable, most
spoke of what Herzberg (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snydeman, 1959) would call hygiene
factors. The job attributes mentioned include health insurance, a pension plan,
accumulated seniority which grants paid vacation time and increased job security, fixed
schedule with regular wages, and good working conditions such as paid breaks,
complimentary food at the employee cafeteria and uniforms. Only two male respondents
mentioned other, more intrinsic job characteristics, which they considered desirable.
When asked what motivated him to change jobs, ST, a male cook responded: “Aprender,
aprender diferentes, diferentes cosas, diferentes clases de cocina, diferentes comidas”.
[To learn, to learn different, different things, different types of cuisine, different foods].
PGM, also a male cook, felt that a desirable job would offer opportunity to learn new
skills as well as the opportunity to change one’s routine by doing something more
interesting and new. Satisfaction with holding a somewhat higher status job than where
they started, was also brought up by these two individuals.

- “Ahora que yo soy cocinero, ahora yo les explico a los runners, cuando yo era
runner, ellos me explicaban a mi. Y ahora explico: “No tienes que hacer esto así,
asi, asi…” más experiencia pues que un runner” (PGM, male cook).
Now that I am a cook, I explain to the runners, when I was a runner, they explained to me. And now I explain: “You don’t have to do this that way but this way…” more experienced than a runner.

“Le ayudo, pues, si necesita el estar allí en la oficina haciendo cosas, yo me encargo, me encargo del personal en área donde yo estoy trabajando...como yo ya tengo más, más experiencia que ellos, por eso me da la confianza más bien” (ST, male cook).

I help him, well, if he needs to be there in the office doing things, I take charge, I take responsibility for the personnel in my work area...as I already have more, more experience than they do, that’s why, he trusts me.

Perhaps PGM and ST recognized desirable job characteristics beyond the basic hygiene factors because they both experienced upward mobility in the past. In addition, both worked in the kitchen where there are numerous opportunities to gain new skills and progress into the different available positions. For example, a cook may progress through various job categories in the kitchen—which vary in required skills and offer progressively higher status and pay levels. Such a progression may be from runner to fry cook, then to line cook or saucier, and all the way up to the position of a Chef. An individual working as a house man or a housekeeper may have fewer such options, and is more likely to feel trapped in a “dead-end job” as mentioned earlier.

Many interviewees did not desire to move into different positions because their present jobs offered benefits that they did not wish to give up. Others felt that the alternative job, even though it represented a promotion and higher occupational status, also carried some undesirable characteristics. For example, by changing jobs one would
have to give up benefits such as having a secured full-time position, a convenient schedule with fixed days off, and accrued seniority which increases job security and amount of paid vacation. A concern that was raised repeatedly is that in a new job, one would have to start as an extra which would not ensure 40-hours a week and possibly lead to a reduction in income. Also as a new employee, with the least amount of seniority, one is the first to be laid off, when labor cuts are done. These regulations are determined by the local union's contract which covers most large casino-hotel employers.

In addition, when upward mobility is perceived as adding stress to one's job, it is less desired. ST, a male cook, felt that the position of saucier (a higher status position in the kitchen) would represent more responsibility: “Si algo sale mal van derechito a la persona” [If something goes bad they come straight to the person]. For this reason, ST felt that taking on the saucier position was undesirable even though he derived pleasure from successfully completing the job related tasks. Possibly, ST perceived that he was only temporarily helping out, as a favor to his manager, until the position would be filled. Ten of the interviewees considered that moving into a supervisory position would be more stressful, because of the added responsibilities that would come with the job. “Es un trabajo estresante... defenderse y acomodar tanta gente” [It's a stressful job... manage and accommodate so many people] (GE, female server assistant).

Two individuals felt that the added stress was not worth it because it was not accompanied by a significant wage increase. PF, a female dishwasher, stated: “Por ese cargo es poco dinero” [For this added burden it is little money]. As mentioned earlier, it was also perceived that a manager would have to deal with internal politics, serving customers, upper management and employees. The additional responsibility and
increased stress level of managerial positions was a concern and subsequent deterrent. Similarly, FG, male house man added:

"Muchos problemas, los compañeros, muchos complaints. Muchas veces los compañeros se están quejando por todo, y este, el manejador ya está ...loco de tantos problemas". [Many problems, the workers, many complaints. Many times the workers get angry for everything, and I mean, the manager is already...crazy from so many problems].

As mentioned earlier, stress appears to plague the lives of many Hispanic immigrants in the United States. The perception that a certain job is characterized by added stress may therefore act as barrier to pursuing that job because it is seen as likely to increase work-related stress that could carry over into one's personal life.

Summary

Clearly, a multitude of factors influence the decision to pursue upward mobility among Mexican immigrants working in the hospitality industry. This chapter presented the variables acting as moderators of the relationship between the desire for, and the actual pursuit of, upward mobility. First, human capital variables were discussed, including English proficiency and educational attainment, in terms of their influence on the pursuit of career progression. Human capital variables can also influence the formation of self-concept because they are related to one's assessment of abilities and because they block many Hispanic immigrants in low status jobs. Self-concept has been identified to play a central role in career progression in several career theories (Gottfredson, 2002; Tokar et al., 2003). Second, issues related to the immigrant situation
were also discussed. Hispanic immigrants possibly experience higher levels of stress as a result of discrimination and acculturation to life in American society. Third, environmental variables were discussed, regarding the ways in which they impact career progression. The perceived saturation of the labor market appeared to be linked to pursuing upward mobility. In addition, the organizational climate and encouragement or lack thereof from one's supervisors and/or managers were identified as related to pursuing upward mobility. Finally, specific job characteristics were also identified as important given their impact on job security and work-related stress level.

As always in the social sciences, there is not one single answer that can explain the antecedents of human behavior. We can, however, attempt to provide theoretical generalizations that may explain how different variables act on, and shape human behavior. This was the attempt of the present study, which examined the motivators and barriers to upward mobility among Mexican immigrants. The complete model and the study's conclusions are presented in Chapter Six. Recommendations for human resources management practices that may increase upward mobility among Mexican immigrant employees are presented in Chapter Seven. This final chapter will also discuss the study's limitations and identify some opportunities for future research.
CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The goal of this study was to identify the different barriers and motivations to career progression among Mexican immigrants employed in line positions in the Las Vegas casino-hotel industry. Identifying barriers and motivations may help in explaining the limited career progression among Hispanics. While many Mexicans immigrating to the U.S. "encounter a plentiful job market that pays better than the one they left behind" (Bernstein, 2003, p. 54), they are still mostly confined to lower-status jobs in this country (Kmec, 2003) and are underrepresented among managers and supervisors (Elliott & Smith, 2001; Walkup, 2000). Some Hispanic immigrants are content with what a North American may consider only basic achievements. This satisfaction may stem from the fact that these achievements exceed what Hispanic immigrants would have been able to obtain in their home countries but also from how cultural factors influence what individuals consider important and central in their lives. If work is but a means to reach a different goal, such as family welfare, then a different set of standards determines what one has achieved.
This study, however, indicated that many Hispanic immigrants are driven to advance and improve their occupational status. Of the seventeen individuals interviewed for this study, ten experienced upward mobility in the past, moving into higher-level line positions. Among them, five wanted to continue their growth within the hospitality industry, four wanted to move out into a different profession or into business ownership, and one desired no further advancement. Of the remaining seven who experienced no upward mobility in the past, four desired none in the future and three hoped to obtain a job change into a higher-level line position. This comes to a total of twelve individuals who wished to progress in their careers. Only two of the twelve who desired upward mobility spoke of doing so into supervisory or managerial positions, and they viewed this as a distant future goal.

Overall, this picture is encouraging, indicating that a desire for mobility among Hispanic immigrant hotel employees does exist. The concern is that while upward mobility does take place, it does not extend into supervisory and managerial positions in numbers comparable to other groups in the population. As mentioned earlier, Latinos remain the most underrepresented in supervisory positions compared to other groups (Elliott & Smith, 2001; Walkup, 2000). The desire to identify the antecedents of this phenomenon, was the reason for conducting this study.

This chapter offers a summary of my findings. I open by presenting the theoretical model constructed based on the data. Then I provide a summary of the barriers and motivations to upward mobility—both to the initial desire to become upwardly mobile and the actual pursuit of upward mobility. These include variables inherent to the person as well as external factors attributable to the environment. The title
of this dissertation describes the importance of individual variables acting as barriers, stressing that the Hispanic immigrant needs to surpass not only externally imposed barriers, but also barriers inherent to him or herself such as cultural variables, different forms of capital, and ethnic and social identity. In summary, in order to demonstrate the applicability of the model, I will provide two personalized examples.

Theoretical Model

The theoretical model constructed based on the findings presented in Chapters Four and Five is presented below (see Figure 1). This model includes the variables acting to promote or suppress the desire for upward mobility as they were identified in this study, including antecedents to the desire for upward mobility and moderators of the relationship between the desire and the actual pursuit of upward mobility. These variables can be grouped under two umbrella terms: individual variables and environmental variables. Individual variables include human capital, self-concept, cultural values, ethnic identity, and stress. Environmental variables include three levels from the most general context of the labor market and the economy, to the organizational culture and finally the job itself (its characteristics).
Individual Variables

The most significant barrier to upward mobility appeared to be the human capital components, including English language proficiency and educational attainment. Limited English proficiency acted as a barrier both directly and indirectly on the desire for and actual pursuit of upward mobility. When English language proficiency or educational attainment are a job requirement, this becomes an obvious barrier. This requirement exists for line positions, which require guest contact and even more so for supervisory positions which require not only oral skills but also some reading and writing...
ability as well as computer skills. Language skills also influence whether one can apply human capital acquired in one's home country to occupations in the U.S. labor market. Similarly, limited educational attainment acts as a barrier when high school completion is a job requirement.

Limited English skills can also constrain one's desire and actual pursuit of upward mobility indirectly, by negatively influencing self-concept. Part of the self-concept is shaped by individual ability assessment. Being unable to fully communicate in English is likely to influence one's personal ability assessment, shaping one's self-concept and impacting desire for and pursuit of upward mobility. In addition, low English proficiency levels limit many Mexican immigrants to specific positions, constraining them into job ghettos of sorts. This concentration in low-status back-of-the-house positions, possibly due to their limited English proficiency and low educational attainment, may influence perceptions of status, which has also been linked to formation of the self-concept.

Finally, some of the interviewees in this study reported discriminatory treatment by their supervisors and/or managers, and subjugation to stereotypes. They felt that they had fewer rights and were treated worse than their non-Hispanic White or other peers. Because discriminatory treatment has also been linked to self-concept formation, discrimination could possibly have an indirect and negative influence on upward mobility. Ethnic identity has also been linked to self-concept formation. Therefore the way one feels about his or her ethnic group can also impact desire for and pursuit of upward mobility.

**Ethnic identity** may also act to suppress the desire for upward mobility. This occurs through one of the coping mechanisms that an individual may put into action...
when he or she perceives a negative ethnic identity. When a person perceives a negative social identity he or she could choose to focus on the positive aspects of one’s group. A few interviewees spoke of the identity of the hard worker, identifying themselves and other Mexicans as good workers. This could be their way of coping with the negative stereotypes often attached to Mexicans in U.S. society. Such a coping mechanism may prevent the desire for and pursuit of a job change because one’s identity is attached in a way to the characteristic of being a hard worker. In addition, if the positive way in which the individual seems him or herself is tied to the identity of the hard worker, pursuing a job change to a less physically demanding job in an office for example, may result in cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance occurs when actions do not match attitudes.

Cultural values are important to consider when studying career progression because they direct human behavior. In addition, personal values, including cultural values, have been shown to influence the formation of self-concept. This study identified the ways in which several Latin American cultural values seem to influence desire for and pursuit of upward mobility. These include *simpatía*, familialism, uncertainty avoidance, present time orientation, and *fatalismo*. The *simpatía* cultural value leads individuals to place great importance on interpersonal relationships (Marín & Marín, 1991). Pursuing, and possibly obtaining, a promotion was perceived as potentially damaging to interpersonal relationships with current peers—especially when a move into supervision and/or management was discussed. Co-ethnic competition and the disapproval of peers was brought up as an undesirable outcome when pursuing upward mobility. In addition, supervisory and managerial duties such as scheduling and disciplining were perceived as detrimental to interpersonal relationships. Therefore, in
order to maintain good relationships with one’s co-workers, staying in one’s current position was perceived as preferable.

Latin American culture tends to rank high on uncertainty avoidance. This means that individuals have a preference for structured, certain and unambiguous situations (Hofstede, 1980). A job change carries some amount of uncertainty even for the most confident of individuals. Therefore, in order to reduce the level of uncertainty in their lives, many Mexican immigrants may choose to remain in their jobs for long periods of time. In addition, higher level jobs, especially managerial positions, often mean increased stress and additional job duties. Because managers must deal with multiple stakeholders—subordinates, upper management and guests—work-related stress is increased when one takes on a managerial position. In addition, such a job change reduces one’s control over the immediate work environment because of the increased number of stakeholders involved. Furthermore, because the union contract determines many decisions based on seniority, a job change, which places one at the bottom of the list in terms of seniority, is perceived as undesirable. Such a loss of accumulated job specific seniority reduces job security because layoffs are determined based on seniority and because the least senior employees may be required to start their new position as extras (not full time) which is likely to reduce income. Finally, uncertainty avoidance is also related to a fear of failure (Hofstede, 2001). This may further limit one’s drive to pursue a job change because a new job also includes new duties at which one is not always proficient. This could be perceived as an additional threat to job security.

The cultural value of familialism indicates strong individual commitment to family welfare, which is often dependent on income. Therefore an action that may
jeopardize one's job or one's income is undesirable. This is also related to the cultural value of high uncertainty avoidance discussed above. Furthermore, promotions into a supervisory and/or managerial position are often associated with an increased number of work hours, time which could be spent with one's family. Having to work more hours, not always for significantly higher pay, is therefore perceived as damaging to one's family life and is therefore undesirable.

Present time orientation may also block upward mobility for two reasons. First, because Mexican immigrants tend to engage in circular migration—when one immigrates with the goal of accumulating wealth and subsequently returning to one's home country—they do not wish to move into supervisory positions. As line employees, Mexican immigrants can hold two jobs as well as have additional income through overtime. These objectives are conflictive with holding a managerial position, because it has higher time demands and therefore would not leave sufficient time to hold a second job, nor earn overtime pay (because it is a exempt position). Second, being present time oriented leads individuals to focus on current obligations and not consider future options (Thiederman, 1991). For this reason, many immigrants fail to invest time and resources into the acquisition of language and other skills necessary for growth in the North American labor market. This limits their future promotability, even when they eventually do decide to remain in the U.S., because it is sometimes too late to acquire the necessary skills.

The last cultural value to influence the desire for upward mobility is fatalismo. Several interviewees seemed to express a fatalistic or passive approach to life, and an external locus of control. This could possibly limit their desires for upward mobility and
most certainly reduce the initiative to actively pursue it. Perceiving that, no matter what
they do their future is determined by God or luck, is likely to limit the incentive to action.
Some interviewees also saw work not as something to be enjoyed in and of itself but
rather as a means to an end—a necessary evil. They may therefore be reluctant to pursue
any changes because as long as their job is not too physically demanding or otherwise
unpleasant, what one does for a living is not perceived as important.

Environmental Factors

External or contextual factors may also act as barriers to pursuing upward
mobility. The contextual factors identified in this study include the labor market, the
organizational climate or culture, and specific job characteristics. The impact of these
variables can be moderated by individual variables such as cultural values, as can be seen
in the model. The labor market and population growth in the Las Vegas metropolitan
area—the fastest growing city in the nation (Suro, 2002)—may act as a deterrent for
many because they perceive that finding alternative employment becomes more difficult.
Many perceived the labor market to be saturated and therefore preferred to hold on to
relatively secure and well paying jobs. As mentioned earlier, when one changes jobs,
even within the same organization, job specific seniority is lost. Because layoffs and full
time status are determined based on seniority, a job change can be perceived as
detrimental to job security. This concern can be even more accentuated for individuals
of a culture high on uncertainty avoidance. It is unclear what the source of this warped
perception is—possibly the post September 11th industry-wide layoffs have had a lasting
impact on individual perceptions.
The organizational climate and/or culture come into play because it dictates what is valued and supported in an organization. This in turn impacts managerial expectations and relationship with subordinates. A supportive organization invests in employee development through training and/or mentoring relationships. This may create a climate in which employees are encouraged and feel supported when pursuing upward mobility. Such organizational relationships, however, were described by two interviewees only. Most others spoke of limited communication with supervisors and/or managers, to the degree of feeling ignored. Many felt that their managers expected them to do their work and nothing more, rarely encouraging participation and aspirations for career progression.

Finally, certain job specific characteristics may also act as a deterrent. For example, the added responsibility and subsequent stress may make higher level line positions as well as supervisory positions appear undesirable. Managers have to accommodate numerous stakeholders, including customers, employees and upper management, making their jobs appear more stressful. The increased number of hours one has to work as a supervisor were also perceived as undesirable, especially because some perceived that the additional responsibility and stress were not accompanied by an appropriate pay raise. In addition, this time could potentially cut into time with family which would be undesirable for those perceiving familialism as central in their lives.

Motivators

The two cultural values which were found to act as drivers for upward mobility were individualism and familialism. Traditionally, Mexican culture was identified as being collectivist, however I found no support for collectivist statements in my data. It is
possible that a value shift in Mexico (Fernandez, et al., 1997) as well as cultural adaptation to life in the U.S. through the acculturation process, increased the degree of individualism among Mexican immigrants. Many explained that their desire to pursue upward mobility was driven by the intrinsic motivation to develop oneself. The desire to learn new skills, grow as a person and feel better about one’s self by gaining higher status were some of the drivers mentioned to explain past and intended future pursuit of upward mobility. In addition, upward mobility into better paying line positions would improve one’s quality of life and the ability to enhance financial stability, standard of living, and the future of one’s family. Familialism may also serve as a driver of upward mobility when a job change was perceived as enhancing family life. This was mentioned mostly by female housekeepers who felt that obtaining a less physically demanding job that would be less tiring, could improve their family life because they would be able to dedicate more time to their children and households.

One’s ethnic identity can also act as a driver to pursue upward mobility and can occur in two different ways. Ethnic identity is related to the way a person feels about his or her ethnic group. First, in an effort to hold a positive social identity, individuals are likely to focus on the positive characteristics and achievements of one’s ethnic group. Evaluating the success of co-ethnic role models could enhance one’s evaluation of personal ability and positively influence self-concept. The tremendous growth of the Hispanic population in the U.S. and the increase in achievements by Hispanic individuals in politics and business was mentioned as a source of pride. The ability to identify co-ethnic role models may lead more Hispanic immigrants to set higher goals for themselves, among which are increased desire for and pursuit of upward mobility.
Second, negative social identity resulting from a negative evaluation of some characteristics of one’s ethnic group may drive the individual to strive to improve his or her social identity by trying to change negative stereotypes. This desire appeared to drive some individuals to actively pursue upward mobility so as to prove to North Americans that Mexicans are as capable and driven as they are. This would also contribute to changing the negative stereotypes attached to Mexicans in American society. The motivation to pursue upward mobility may also stem from the desire to differentiate oneself from other co-ethnic peers with whose behaviors one is dissatisfied. Socially responsible behavior such as being financially self-sufficient and not relying on welfare or other government support was seen as the responsibility of every Mexican, so as to change negative stereotypes or at least not contribute to their perpetuation.

Environmental factors that act as motivators to pursue upward mobility include organizational climate and specific job characteristics. Working in a supportive organization where employee development opportunities are available was brought up as a motivator. In addition, working for a supportive supervisor or manager was also mentioned as encouragement in the pursuit of upward mobility. Because Hispanic employees are more likely to commit to a person rather than an organization (Hofstede, 1980), having a supportive manager may promote upward mobility since employees would not want to let their manager down. Specific job characteristics that were brought up as motivating upward mobility were both intrinsic and extrinsic. Having a job that is less physically demanding and offers a better hourly pay rate was perceived as desirable. In addition, being at a higher status was mentioned as satisfactory in terms of personal achievement.
Personalized Examples

In order to show how the model may be used to explain, I offer two personal stories of individuals interviewed for this study. While the individuals were real, I congregated some comments from various interviewees into these two examples. These details were added so as to “humanize” the stories, and to attempt to describe the thought processes and mind frames of the individuals. First, I describe the experiences of Francisco, a male house man, to demonstrate the ways in which barriers act on the desire for and pursuit of upward mobility. Second, I selected the case of Diana, a female food server, to show what variables can promote the desire for and pursuit of upward mobility. I selected these two individuals because their approaches to upward mobility were opposed even though their educational attainment was the same and their U.S. tenure was similar.

Example 1

Francisco is a male house man who is 49 years old. He has been living in the U.S. for 19 years and has been working as a house man in the housekeeping department at the same hotel-casino in Las Vegas for 13 years. In Mexico, he completed high school and continued for an additional three years of technical school to become an electrician. Francisco does not desire to change his job. In the following I present some of the antecedents for his case. This discussion does not seek to critique Francisco’s lack of desire for a promotion or job change but rather demonstrate what forces could have shaped his approach.

Upon immigration, Francisco was focused on family finances, working two jobs, he did not find the time to acquire sufficient English skills to pass the certificate exam
that would allow him to work as an electrician in the United States. Francisco felt frustrated but, pressed by the obligation to provide for his family, accepted the jobs he was able to obtain as a Hispanic immigrant with limited English skills. The frustration with being unable to work in his profession, and having to do a menial, low-skilled, low-status job instead, gradually hurt Francisco’s perceived ability. He was no longer sure if he could learn English and become proficient enough to pass the exam even if he tried.

When contemplating a job change, Francisco decided he did not desire one.

A new job would mean he had to start over again in a new department with coworkers and supervisors he did not know. The work relationships Francisco had with his peers were a great source of entertainment. These people—other Latinos—had been his friends for many years. Changing his job would mean not being able to interact with them anymore—was he willing to give up these friendships? Furthermore, Francisco was concerned that his peers would interpret his desire for a job change as though he considered himself to be superior to them in some way, which could hurt the good relationship he currently had with them. Not to mention if he became their supervisor—that would surely destroy the pleasant work atmosphere he now had because as their supervisor, he would have to discipline his friends. Also, supervisors work more than 40 hours a week and that would seriously cut into Francisco’s time with his children and grandchildren. Being with his family was the most important thing to Francisco and he would not take a position that would cut into that time, even if it meant he could make a little more money every month.

Changing jobs also meant Francisco would lose his job specific seniority. In a new department he would start as an extra, which would not ensure him the currently
secured 40-hours a week. How would he meet his financial obligations if that happened? He could even lose his health insurance coverage if he was no longer considered full time, and all the paid vacation he was now entitled to would be lost as well. In the past, Francisco had a run-in with his manager because the latter refused to give Francisco and his wife the same shift and the same days off. Francisco was very angry because he felt that after so many years of loyal service to the company, that was not too much to ask. He was sure his manager was still upset at him for making special requests and would jump on the opportunity to let Francisco go. After all, he completely ignored Francisco and his peers—never even saying “hello.” This manager could not possibly care about Francisco’s welfare if he was not willing to accommodate such a simple request and never takes any interest in his employees. Because a job change would place Francisco at the bottom of the list in case of layoffs he was concerned that his manager would take advantage of this opportunity and fire Francisco. As an immigrant, Francisco felt he had fewer rights. He did not feel he would be able to stand up for himself and make sure he got his job back. He could not really read properly in English, and was not fully aware of his rights, plus not wanting to look stupid, he preferred not to ask. Francisco knew that the labor market was very saturated with all the influx of people into the Las Vegas area—finding a job would be very difficult, especially since employers can be picky now—selecting only people who speak perfect English.

Francisco felt that even if he decided to apply for a job in a different department, like maintenance, for example, he would never get it—there are no Latinos in that department and this was probably not about to change. Anyway, did he really want to work with White Anglos every day? Who would he have fun with and go to lunch with?
He did not feel he could make any friends in that department, not like the friends he had now. In many ways, Francisco was happy with his job, he knew all the duties well and was familiar with each manager’s little pet-peeves. In a new position, he would have to learn all that over. He felt that this would be stressful. Life seemed stressful enough with having to support—with only two salaries—a large family. Francisco’s household included his four under-age children, his oldest daughter and her spouse and two children, as well as his wife’s father. In addition, Francisco was remitting money to Mexico every month for his parents. In reality, Francisco was very proud of the work he did; he knew Mexicans were hard workers and that this is a respectful trait. Anglos only want to do easy office jobs but that is not a real man’s work. Even if sometimes work was not too interesting and Francisco felt tired, he knew work was not supposed to be fun or interesting. It is just something you he had to do so as to do his duty and provide for his family. Francisco felt proud of the financial achievements he made in the United States. He had his own home, two cars, and a family that was well cared for. He was a man to be respected—why change anything?

Example 2

Diana is a 37-year old female food server. She has been living in the U.S. for 13 years and has been working at the same casino hotel for the last five. While working at that property she progressed from dish-washer to bus person and is now a food server. In Mexico, she completed high school and continued for an additional three years of technical school to earn a profession. Diana aspires to continue developing her career, possibly becoming a banquet food server or a butler, and in the future she considers a supervisory and/or managerial position as a viable option.
When coming to the U.S. Diana felt motivated by all the opportunities. In Mexico, in spite of her education, she could not find a job that would allow her to support her family. She saw success stories of other Mexican immigrants in the U.S. and knew that she could also succeed if she set her mind to it. Her English was very poor so she started as a dishwasher. The company for which she was working was very supportive, offering free English classes after work. It was hard to make time for the classes with her family to take care of but Diana did it. She saw other Latinos in her department who had been promoted to higher level line positions. Her manager was a very caring person, he made it a point to remember all of his employees’ names and even tried to know a little about every person. Once Diana’s English improved, she became a bus person. This was not as physically demanding as having to wash dishes in scalding hot water all day. Diana liked the opportunity to interact with people, both guests and other coworkers. Today Diana’s English is pretty good and she is already a food server. She would like to be promoted to banquet server or a butler in the future. It is more interesting and she would have the opportunity to learn new skills like serving wines, for example. In addition, she will make more money through tips. Diana knows that if she keeps learning new skills and improving herself, she could become a supervisor and later on maybe even an assistant manager in her department. Her boss is very supportive of people who want to progress and treats everyone with respect.

Diana feels personal satisfaction from her progress—she feels she is setting an example to her children. Many Mexicans come to the U.S. and instead of working, take advantage of the system, using welfare and other Government support. Diana is angry with these people and does not want to be associated with them, even though they are
Latinos just like she is. They are to blame for giving Latinos a bad name and fueling the ugly stereotypes about Mexicans being lazy. For this reason Diana will do everything she can to always be self-sufficient and never have to rely on Government support. This is the only way to show Anglos that Latinos are a positive element in the country, equally contributing to growth and development. It is unpleasant to hear what some people say about Latinos but Diana knows that if she, and others like her, will succeed, it will help change these stereotypes with time.

Diana remembered that every time she changed jobs, life was a bit more stressful because she had to get used to new people and learn new skills. The satisfaction with her personal achievement, however, made it all worth it. She knew that her manager would not fire her if she made a mistake but rather teach her the right way to do things and encourage her to continue growing. She felt that her company truly wanted to allow everyone to be promoted—as long as they deserved it by earning the necessary skills. She felt that she could achieve whatever she set her mind to. This was her American dream.

Implications for Career Theories

This study did not test a specific career theory. However, based on my findings, I offer some recommendations as to the ways in which career theories can be enhanced. In the following I present some comments for the theories discussed in Chapter Two. While each theory may suffer from several limitations, I offer only comments based upon the findings of my study.
Holland's theory (1985) assumes that vocational interest is an expression of personality. His theory is limited in its ability to explain the immigrant situation because it does not address contextual factors, which may influence personality development among immigrants such as discrimination and stereotyping. I found that discrimination and negative stereotypes attached to Mexican immigrants were a concern among interviewees. In addition, other outlets for self-expression exist outside of work and upward mobility is not necessarily central for individuals who perceive work as a necessary evil—something that must be done rather than an end in and of itself. For example, an individual may be very outgoing and social but for lack of English and other skills be able to obtain employment only as a housekeeper. This individual could find self-expression as a leader in a local church or union, being unable to find it at work.

Super's theory (1991) proposed that self-concept shapes one's vocational identity and determines occupational choice. While self-concept formation is influenced by some variables specific to Hispanic immigrants (such as cultural values and ethnic identity), Super's theory remains limited because it assumes that all individuals proactively chose their career. This is not so for those who face discrimination and have low educational attainment and limited English proficiency. In addition, Super's theory assumes linear career development, which is usually not the case for immigrants who often have to start their career over when immigrating to the U.S. because foreign-earned work experience often does not 'count' in the U.S. labor market.

Career self-efficacy theory (Betz & Hackett, 1986) proposes that career self-efficacy expectations (beliefs about one's own ability to successfully perform occupationally relevant behaviors) guide one's actions to pursue career development.
This theory can be applicable to Hispanic immigrants because the formation process of self-efficacy beliefs accounts for many immigrant-related variables. Bandura's (1977) stated that self-efficacy expectations are learned through four sources of information: accomplishments, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion, and lower levels of anxiety. Individual variables will come into play in the formation of self-efficacy beliefs. For example, if an immigrant has limited U.S.-based work experience he or she will possibly have lower self-efficacy because of lower accomplishments working in the U.S. labor market. In addition, the lack of role models could be accounted for in the vicarious learning portion of self-efficacy formation, although one may certainly observe and learn vicariously from a non-co-ethnic role model. Finally, higher levels of anxiety possibly due to limited English proficiency will also influence self-efficacy formation.

While this theory can be applicable to Hispanic immigrants, some adjustments are necessary. This theory suffers from three central limitations in terms of its applicability to diverse populations. Because it does not account for the way in which social class influences one's sense of self-efficacy, when comparative studies are done, social-class would need to be controlled for. Second, the theory fails to account for the way in which perceived discrimination can act as a moderating variable between self-efficacy and pursuit of specific occupations. In order to adjust for this concern, when this theory is tested, perceived discrimination should also be measured and controlled for. Finally, outcome expectations can act as moderators between perceived self-efficacy and career pursuit. Bandura (1986) described outcomes expectations in classes of physical outcomes (such as financial), social outcomes (such as praise), and self-evaluative outcomes (such as sense of accomplishment). Cultural values can also act as moderators.
For example, the Latin American cultural value of *simpatia* may prevent a highly efficacious individual from accepting a different position if he or she feels that this will separate him or her from a supportive co-ethnic peer group. For this reason, when career self-efficacy theory is tested, outcome expectations should be measured as well.

Gottfredson’s (1981, 1986, 2002) theory and adult career development theory (Vondracek & Kawasaki, 1995) could be applicable to ethnic minorities and immigrants alike because they account for the influence of environmental factors and individual factors such as self-concept. Gottfredson’s theory identified the self-concept as the origin of career interests and vocational choice. Her theory, however, seems limited in terms of accounting for the impact of cultural values on career progression. Vondracek and Kawasaki’s (1995) adult career development theory accounts for four groups of variables, which influence career progression. These include individual motivation, personal skills, biological functioning, and a responsive environment. While the two theories appear applicable to Hispanic immigrants to some extent, both lack empirical testing with the majority group as well as ethnic minorities and immigrants.

**Summary**

Additional research is necessary in order to test the relationships identified in this study. The exploratory nature of this research allowed me to uncover some of the variables that influence desire for and actual pursuit of upward mobility among Hispanic immigrants. More attention needs to be given to the various aspects of national culture when studying career progression among Hispanics living and working in the U.S., especially among Hispanic immigrants. This study clearly exposed some of the ways in
which national culture comes into play at work and how it influences upward mobility. The immigrant experience must also not be ignored—including ethnic identity and stress. This study, and others before it, drew attention to the fact that Hispanic immigrants face multiple challenges when entering the North American job market. This includes perceptions of discrimination, stereotyping, occupational status, and human capital, which can all be detrimental to self-concept formation. Chapter Seven offers some recommendations for human resources managers on ways in which workplace interactions and upward mobility can be improved for Hispanic immigrants. It also offers some limitations of this study and suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER SEVEN

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter discussed the limitations of this study. It offers some recommendations for human resources management strategies that could potentially improve the experiences of Hispanic immigrants workers in North American workplaces. Suggestions are offered regarding training for employees and supervisors and/or managers which could improve communication, enhance employee self-esteem, and contribute to promoting career progression among Hispanic immigrants. This chapter concludes with some suggestions for future research that could potentially answer some of the questions raised in this study.

Limitations

The first limitation of my study is the focus on a single industry—the Las Vegas hospitality industry—which has several unique characteristics likely to influence its workforce. In the Las Vegas hospitality industry most line positions are unionized. The individuals in these jobs—many of whom are immigrants—earn a living wage. This creates a situation in which some line-employees earn more than their supervisors when
one does a pay comparison based on an hourly rate. This is predominantly so in tipped positions, where employees, working fewer hours, earn a higher hourly rate than their managers, creating a situation in which many line employees decide not to pursue a supervisory position because they are able to earn more while working fewer hours as line employees. In addition, because the union contract determines many things based on seniority, individuals may be de-motivated to change jobs. Once an individual changes positions, very often job specific seniority is lost which includes loss of accrued paid vacation, job security (as layoffs are determined by seniority), fixed days off, full time status, and schedule.

However, in relation to the other, non-economic barriers to upward mobility, this sample can teach us about the possible situation of less fortunate Hispanic immigrants working in the United States. For those who are not making a living wage, do not hold health insurance and retirement plans, and suffer unemployment and poverty, low status, ethnic identity, and self-concept issues are likely to be even more pronounced than they were for the participants in this study.

A second limitation is related to my sample. While representative of most of the employment categories held by Hispanic immigrants in the Las Vegas hospitality industry, the sample is somewhat different in demographic characteristics from the typical Mexican immigrant in the United States. Interviewees were, on average, 38.6 years old (range 24-63) which is older than the median age for Hispanics living in the U.S., identified as 24.7 years (Guzmán, 2001). This discrepancy may be present because my sample included only working individuals, excluding children and retired people. In addition, the sample’s U.S. tenure of 16.6 years (range 5-37) was longer than that of the
typical Latin American immigrant (Schmidley, 2001) which is 13.5 years. This
difference is possibly due to the fact that proper documentation is a basic requirement for
employment in the large hotel-casinos in Las Vegas. This could potentially exclude more
recent, undocumented individuals. Also, most casinos require some previous work
experience, which would require individuals to have worked for some time in the U.S.
before obtaining employment in one of the casino-hotels in town. In addition, the
individuals were accessed through a list provided by a local church which supports
immigrants through the citizenship process. This may account for the higher level of
U.S. tenure reported by my interviewees, as there is a minimal number of years one must
reside in the U.S. prior to being eligible to apply for citizenship.

Finally, in terms of educational attainment, average years of schooling was 9
(range 3-15), and 47% of the sample held a high school diploma or above. This is higher
than the 33.8% high school completion rate for foreign-born Mexicans (Schmidley,
2001). This discrepancy may be due to the fact that most of the large casino-hotels in Las
Vegas are unionized and considered good employers—offering a living wage as well as
benefit and retirement plans. This allows these employers to be more selective in hiring
and select more individuals holding a high school diploma. These demographic
differences may also influence desires for upward mobility. For example, given that my
sample was significantly older than the median age for Hispanics in the U.S. could have
influenced their priorities. Given the fact that many had families to care for could
accentuate even further concerns of job loss and uncertainty avoidance.

A third limitation lies the fact that I was a single researcher and in my ethnic
background. Although fluent in Spanish, I am not of Hispanic origin, and while I
mentioned being an immigrant myself, the fact that I am White and fluent in English may have led some interviewees to identify me as more similar to Anglos than to Hispanics. This may have caused some intercultural communication barriers of which I may have remained unaware. In addition, past research has shown that when interviewers differ in their physical or social characteristics from the interviewees, some bias may be introduced into responses, which may have an effect on the quality of data received (Bailey, 1994). In addition, as a single researcher I completed the data analysis and coding process alone. Specialists in the field of qualitative research recommend cross validation of the typology of recurring themes by using a minimum of two researchers (Miles & Huberman, 1984). When two or more researchers analyze data, identifying recurring themes and codes, discrepancies can be discussed. This increases the reliability of the themes identified and subsequent conclusions (Lee, 1999).

A fourth limitation, which could also be seen as a strength, lies in the way access to study participants was gained. Because individuals were accessed through a list provided by a local church which supports immigrants through the citizenship process, they may not be typical of other Mexican immigrants. In fact, as mentioned in Chapter Two, only 21.1 percent of Central Americans living in the U.S., most of whom are from Mexico, are American citizens (Schmidley, 2001). The fact that the individuals in my study are actively pursuing American citizenship may indicate that they are somewhat different from other Mexican immigrants living in the United States. However, if these individuals still face numerous barriers to upward mobility, other Mexican immigrants, who have not taken this initiative, may face these barriers to an even larger extent.
A final limitation lies in the data collection methodology used. Once analysis is completed and conceptual conclusions are offered, individual differences among participants are dissipated. Through the analysis process, discrete concepts reflective of each participant’s unique experiences are collapsed into increasingly abstract, general categories. The end result is that the proposed conclusions are characteristic of most participants, while variant responses receive little if any attention (Richie et al., 1997). Furthermore, in this study I employed a single data collection method. Hackett (1997) recommends triangulating data through diverse data sources as a way to strengthen qualitative studies. “Triangulating multiple sources of data can enhance the applicability of the results in a qualitative study” (Richie et al., 1997, p.146). While my study included diverse occupations within the hospitality industry, as well as both genders and different age groups, additional sources of data might have further strengthened this study. Because of the way access was obtained, I was unable to conduct observations at the interviewees’ places of employment, for example, which could have been another possible data collection method.

Recommendations for Human Resource Management

Language Training

Given the extensive impact of English language skills on the life of Mexican immigrants in the U.S., investing in language education could prove very beneficial. Offering such classes could benefit casino-hotels because employees’ enhanced language skills will improve communication and possibly guest-service as well. Employees are also likely to benefit from this because stronger language skills will likely strengthen
their self-esteem (Portes & Zady, 2002) and self-concept (Tokar et al., 2003). In addition, employees who are able to communicate freely are more likely to have a higher sense of control over their work lives. They will be more capable to communicate with supervisors and non-Hispanic peers, which may contribute to the promotion of the simpatia cultural value as well as reduce misperceptions and misunderstandings.

For this reason, I find the following trend, reported in a recent article in HR Magazine, especially troubling. This article reported that when it comes to foreign language staff training, organizations lean toward offering Spanish classes to English-speaking supervisors rather than English classes to their Hispanic and other immigrant workers. The rationale behind this trend was that: “it makes more sense to train someone who has a long-term career with the company than to train employees who move on after a few years” (Tyler, 2003, p. 85). This approach is misguided, as Hofstede (2001) identified Mexican employees as having higher levels of employment stability. This is also visible in my sample, in which twelve of the total seventeen interviewees have been employed in the same organizations for five years or longer.

Given the significant impact English language acquisition may have on the immigrant’s life, investing in language training could be very beneficial. This will positively influence the individual’s perceived ability and contribute to the strengthening of the self-concept, possibly increasing the motivation to pursue upward mobility as well. Indeed, in an overview of various industry practices, Kasey (1997) found a positive correlation between increased individual skills and abilities and self-esteem. “When organizations use training and development programs as catalysts, there is a positive return on human capital investment. As individuals increase their skills and abilities
through the use of training and development program, they experience degrees of esteem” (Kasey, 1997, p. 766). Similarly, Holland (1994), a researcher in the field of vocational psychology, “expressed the view that individuals with low self-esteem may not act on their interests and suggested that interventions designed to increase an individual’s range of experiences would be useful in increasing self-efficacy” (Betz, 2001, p. 56). Through training this “range of experiences” could be enhanced, possibly having a positive impact on perceived ability and self-concept formation.

Personnel management specialists recommend that companies offer not only English classes to their foreign-born employees but also foreign language classes to native English speakers. Offering such classes could contribute to improved relationships among employees. For example, “in a factory outside Chicago, both English and Spanish classes were offered to managers and employees….many of the plant’s Polish and Yugoslavian workers decided to take Spanish—so they could speak it to Hispanic co-workers” (Anonymous, 1992, p.10).

Past studies have identified a lack of participation among Hispanics in organizationally sponsored training (Young, 2003). For these reasons, companies could take steps to motivate their employees in order to increase participation. This could be achieved by using some of Hispanic cultural values to the organization’s advantage. For example, by showing how improving one’s English skills could benefit one’s family, or improve one’s relationships at work, organizations may be able to motivate Hispanics to take part in language courses. Linking English acquisition and the ability to assist one’s children with school could be one way to send a powerful message that is likely to increase participation. In addition, integrating group work into classes could serve as a
way for employees to socialize, and possibly render the classes more enjoyable for individuals who value interpersonal interaction. Finally, companies could benefit from the relationship orientation of Hispanic culture by rewarding individuals for bringing coworkers to classes and having them attend a minimal number of sessions.

Skills Training

Offering different promotional paths and training opportunities that help employees gain new skills may also encourage upward mobility—when employees feel valued. This will also communicate the organizational culture to line employees and managers—namely a culture that supports those who desire to advance. Overcoming the challenge of recruiting employees to participate in language and other training may require some creativity. Hispanics tend not to use organizationally sponsored training if they perceive it is not relevant to their job (Young, 2003). Initiatives such as equipping housekeepers with Walk-mans that would allow them to learn necessary vocabulary and key phrases while on the job, is only one example of an innovative approach to training that could be used.

There is a need for an increase in the number of minority supervisors and managers because these individuals will serve as role models for line employees. Seeing a co-ethnic individual in a higher level position in one’s organization may expose workers to the fact that obtaining higher level positions is possible, not only for Whites but for Hispanics as well. Companies that wish to do more than simply “talk the talk” need to make a conscious effort to prepare and promote Hispanics into key positions, so as to communicate to others that this is a possibility they can aspire to, possibly limiting the effects of leveled aspirations (MacLeod, 1995).
Management Training

An issue of some concern, which was raised in several interviews, was the problematic relationship between co-ethnic managers and employees. It is possible that Hispanic supervisors and managers may need some management training. Many organizations already offer diversity training to their managerial workforce. Adding additional interpersonal communication skills training could possibly lead to smoother relationships among co-ethnic supervisors and subordinates. In addition, the limited communication with managers, co-ethnic and not, appeared to be a major concern. While interpersonal communication may not be a central issue in American society, it is in Mexican society. North Americans often regard work relations as a business transaction (Hofstede, 2001). This is significantly different in the Mexican culture where it is considered appropriate and important for a manager to take interest in his or her employees' lives. Hispanics may actually have more respect for a manager or coworker who seeks to know them as human beings, asking about family and life interests (Thiederman, 1991). Possibly, cultural sensitivity or diversity training could benefit the non-Hispanic managerial workforce as well.

As mentioned in Chapter One, organizations whose employees are trained to be sensitive to cultural differences may successfully reduce ethnocentrism. They may be able to: (a) improve communication, in spite of language barriers; (b) more effectively motivate workers by using culturally-aware motivational strategies; (c) accurately evaluate culturally diverse applicants and employees; and (d) create a more harmonious and comfortable workplace (Thiederman, 1991). Offering bilingual services to
employees can also improve communication and reduce misunderstandings as well as communicate organizational concern for employee welfare.

**Increasing Awareness**

It is possible that many Hispanics do not aspire to anything beyond blue-collar jobs because they are unfamiliar with the opportunities available to them. This was evident in some of my interviews when interviewees mentioned being unaware of where they could obtain information on possible learning opportunities within the community. In addition, lack of familiarity with possible paths of career progression may create a perception of limited opportunities. Brown and Minor (1992) reported that a higher proportion of Hispanics believed they needed assistance in finding information about jobs than did White European Americans. “It seems likely that any group with limited English proficiency will have limited amounts of occupational information and that the information they have may not be as accurate as that available to their counterparts who have greater English proficiency” (Brown, 2002, p. 52). This is related to having limited social capital and thus limited access to individuals who can disseminate information about various career opportunities. Lack of awareness of opportunity was also cited as a barrier for career advancement among women (Fitzgerald & Harmon, 2001).

Organizations may benefit from informing employees about learning opportunities and possible growth opportunities. This could include information on training opportunities available in-house but also in the community, such as language or computer classes offered at local community centers and/or academic institutions. In addition, highlighting the career development of an individual to whom employees may relate could be informative regarding available opportunities. This could be done by, for
example, periodically highlighting the career path of a specific employee in the company newsletter. By focusing on employees of different backgrounds, racial and ethnic groups, one may offer role models for a diverse work force. This may also serve to increase pride in one's ethnic group, especially among minority employees for whom ethnic identity is more salient and who may suffer from negative stereotypes associated with their group. This approach was used in a recent ad campaign launched to recruit workers for the gaming industry. The Culinary Training Academy, a nonprofit partnership of the culinary union and 24 resort operators in Las Vegas, used real workers of diverse backgrounds in their 30-second ads. Campaign managers believed that by using real workers rather than actors, they will be able to turn these individuals into role models because “potential workers want to hear people like themselves” (Smith, 2004, p. 6D).

Future Research

The tension among Hispanic managers and/or supervisors and their Hispanic subordinates begs further attention. Instinctively, one may expect the reverse situation. Given that co-ethnic individuals share a common language and similar cultural values, one would expect the relationship between employees and their supervisors to be anything but problematic. It would be beneficial to address this question by investigating the attitudes and perceptions of Hispanic managers and supervisors. This would possibly provide more insight into the antecedents of the behaviors that taint the relationship between Hispanic supervisors and/or managers and their co-ethnic subordinates. Additional research would be required in order to explain this interesting phenomenon. It is possible that high levels of power distance in Latin American culture lies at the source.
of this problematic relationship. Power distance refers to the degree to which the members of a society accept the unequal distribution of power in society (pluralist vs. elitist). It is similar to the Hispanic cultural value of *respeto*, a construct which "accentuates the importance of deference or respect for individuals who occupy roles of higher prestige, recognition, and power in society" (Yep, 1995, p. 202). Possibly, Hispanic supervisors feel they deserve more respect based on their occupational status, and therefore feel they are entitled to treat their subordinates in a way that accentuates the status difference between them.

Another plausible explanation is that Hispanic employees expect their co-ethnic supervisors to give them preferential treatment and when this does not occur, some voice their disappointment which leads to a deterioration of the relationship. A final possibility is that Hispanic supervisors feel they are scrutinized to a higher degree by their own managers so they do not give preferential treatment to co-ethnic subordinates. This may pressure them to take a reverse approach, namely discriminating against their co-ethnic subordinates, so as to be beyond suspicion of giving preferential treatment. Additional investigation of this issue might prove which of these factors is indeed occurring.

An additional interesting avenue for future research lies in the competition and disapproval of peers when a co-ethnic individual pursues upward mobility. A possible explanation lies in Tesser's (1986, 1988) self-evaluation model. This model predicts that superior performance of in-group members could be threatening to one's self-esteem when comparisons are made on ability demands that are relevant to self-esteem—such as work performance. Tesser (1988) found that individuals felt diminished when they engaged in upward comparisons with in-group members. Individuals prefer downward
comparison targets as a way of creating positive contrast between the self and other (Tesser, 1988). Therefore, Mexican immigrant employees may perceive a threat to their own self-evaluation when their co-ethnic peers grow and surpass them at work. The researcher explains that minority group members are more likely to compare themselves to other in-group members than to members of the majority group. While Tesser's (1988) research was conducted with African Americans, it may well be applicable to the experience of Hispanic immigrants in the United States.

A third area that could be of special interest is the concept of leveled aspirations. Further investigation could identify to what extent this phenomenon takes place among Mexican immigrants. Are their aspirations for upward mobility indeed limited to growth within the confines of line positions, excluding supervisory and managerial opportunities? This study has identified many variables that act as barriers to the desire of and actual pursuit of upward mobility. It did not, however, identify which of these variables are stronger or most common. For this purpose, a larger sample and possibly different research methods would be needed. Finally, testing career theories with a Hispanic immigrant sample could represent a major contribution to the field of vocational psychology. For example, studying the relationship between perceived discrimination and self-efficacy regarding job promotions could strengthen career self-efficacy theory (Betz & Hackett, 1986).

A final area that has been left unanswered in this study relates to the way in which individual differences influence upward mobility. There is a need to identify the reasons why certain variables block upward mobility for some individuals, yet act as motivators for others. For example, it remains unclear why negative ethnic identity triggers different
coping mechanisms among different people. In addition, it would be beneficial to test the findings of this study in a different industry and in different occupations as well.

Summary

In this chapter I discussed the limitations of my study. I also offered some recommendations for human resources management strategies for managing a diverse work force in North American workplaces. I suggested that organizations should offer language, skills, and management training for employees and supervisors and/or managers which could improve communication, enhance employee self-esteem, strengthen self-concept, and contribute to promoting career progression among Hispanic immigrants. In addition, organizations may benefit from communicating to their workforce what opportunities are already available, both in house and in the community. Given that past studies have identified a lack of participation among Hispanics in organizationally sponsored training, companies could take steps to motivate their employees.
APPENDIX A
SEMI-STRUCTURE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Gender:
Age:
Birth Country:
U.S. tenure:
Marital Status:
Education Level:
Tenure Culinary:
Tenure at work:

1. Tell me about your work. What do you do? What do you usually do on a typical day?
   Describe it please.
2. What are some things you like about your job? What are some things you dislike about your job?
3. Would you want to do a different kind of job? Do you sometimes think of doing a different kind of job? Did you ever act on this desire?
   What happened when you acted on this desire?
   (a) How would your work-life be different (better or worse) if you had a different position?
   (b) What would you need to do in order to be promoted to a different position?
4. Would you want to be a supervisor or manager? What would you need to do in order to be promoted to become a supervisor or manager?
   (a) How would your work-life be different (better or worse) if you were a supervisor or manager?
   (b) What would you need to do in order to be promoted to become a supervisor or manager?
5. What do you look for in a job? What characteristics make a job desirable?
6. Tell me about the people you work with. How do you like the people you work with? Do you get along with peers and supervisors and/or managers?
7. Can you give me some examples for how working in Las Vegas is better/worse than working in another U.S. city?
8. What would you tell a family member from a different city in the U.S., about working in Las Vegas?
9. What differences have you found between work in the U.S. and Mexico? Where would you rather work, in the United States or Mexico?
10. What do you think your employer is looking for or expects from his or her employees? What do you think your supervisor/manager expects from you?
11. How does it feel to be a Latino/a working in a hotel in Las Vegas?
12. Who do you see as similar to you, who do you identify with?
13. If I were to ask you to describe yourself, what would you tell me? Assuming I wanted to know who you are, what information would I need to be able to describe you? Choose three words to describe yourself.

244

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APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM ENGLISH VERSION

University of Nevada Las Vegas
William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration

Informed Consent

My name is Rachel Shinnar, and I am a graduate student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. I am working under the supervision of Dr. Cheri A. Young from the Department of Hotel Management. I am asking for your participation in a research project on the life of Hispanic immigrants in the United States. Your participation will consist of an interview. I will be asking you various questions regarding your life and your work in the United States. The interview should last approximately 60 minutes.

By participating in this study, you will assist me in my research project. You will also help me in creating new knowledge about Hispanic immigrants living and working in the United States. Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any time.

I will ask for your permission to tape record our conversation. I will be the only one listening to the tape recordings and they will not be made available to any one, under any circumstances. If during the interview you wish for the tape recorder to be turned off you may ask for it at any time. The risks involved in this research are minimal, and may include experiencing some discomfort while answering some questions. Please feel free to ask any questions you may have about the information being provided to you about this study. You will be given a copy of this form.

All information gathered in this study will remain completely confidential. Your name will not appear anywhere in my report. No reference will be made in written or oral materials, which could link you to this study. All records will be retained for at least three years after the completion of the study in locked file cabinets at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, after which point they will be destroyed by shredding. If you have any concerns or questions about the study, you may contact me, Rachel Shinnar, at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas at (702) 895-4458 or Dr. Cheri A. Young at (702) 895-4124. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, you may contact the UNLV Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at (702) 895-2794.

By signing below, you are indicating you have read and understand the above information and agree to participate in this study.

[Signature]
Date

Signature of Researcher
Date

Your signature (participant)
APPENDIX C
CONSENT FORM SPANISH VERSION

Universidad de Nevada, Las Vegas
William F. Harrah Facultad de Administración Hotelera

Carta de Consentimiento

Mi nombre es Rachel Shinnar y soy estudiante de postgrado en la Universidad de Las Vegas, Nevada. Trabajo bajo la supervisión de la Dra. Cheri A. Young del departamento de Administración Hotelera. Le solicito su participación en un estudio acerca de la vida de los inmigrantes Hispánicos en los Estados Unidos. Su participación implicará ser entrevistado y contestar las preguntas que se le formulen, lo cual tomará aproximadamente 60 minutos de su tiempo.

Al participar, usted me ayudará llevar a cabo mi estudio. Usted también me ayudará a producir información sobre la vida de los inmigrantes Hispánicos que viven y trabajan en los Estados Unidos. Su participación en este estudio es estrictamente voluntaria y, usted puede suspenderla en cualquier momento que desee.

Le pediré su permiso de grabar nuestra conversación. Yo seré la única persona que escuchará las cintas y estas cintas no estarán a disposición de ninguna otra persona bajo ninguna circunstancia. El riesgo implicado en esta investigación es mínimo y puede incluir el experimentar incomodidad al contestar algunas preguntas. Es usted libre de preguntar sobre cualquier duda que pudiera tener acerca de la información que se le proporciona con respecto a este estudio. A usted se le entregará una copia de esta carta de consentimiento.

Toda la información recibida en este estudio permanecerá completamente confidencial. No se hará ninguna referencia en materiales escritos u orales que lo pueda relacionar con este estudio. Todos los datos recogidos serán guardados por tres años después de la conclusión del estudio, en la Universidad de Las Vegas, Nevada, dentro de armarios bajo llave. Después de este tiempo toda información será destruida. Si usted tiene cualquier duda o pregunta acerca de este estudio, puede comunicarse conmigo, Rachel Shinnar, en la Universidad de Las Vegas, Nevada al (702) 895-4458 o con la Dra. Cheri A. Young, en la Universidad de Las Vegas, Nevada al (702) 895-4124. Para preguntas con respecto a los derechos de sujetos investigados, usted puede ponerse en contacto con la Oficina para la Protección de Sujetos de Investigación de UNLV al (702) 895-2794.

Al firmar la presente, usted está indicando que ha leído y entendido la información arriba descrita y está de acuerdo en participar en este estudio.

Firma del Participante  ____________________________  Fecha

Firma del Investigador  ____________________________  Fecha

246
APPENDIX D
HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL FORM

UNLV

Social/Behavioral IRB - Expedited Review
Approval Notice

DATE: November 18, 2003

TO: Rachel S. Shinnar
Hotel Administration

FROM: Dr. Michael Stitt, Chair
UNLV Social/Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board

RE: Status of Human Subject Protocol Entitled: Assessing the Drivers of Hispanic Employees’ Work Motivation OPRS# 600S0903-325

This memorandum is official notification that the protocol for the project referenced above has met the criteria for exemption from full committee review by the UNLV Social/Behavioral Institutional Review Board (IRB) as indicated in regulatory statues 45CFR 46.110. The protocol has been submitted through the expedited review process and has been approved.

The protocol is approved for a period of one year from the date of IRB review. Work on the project may proceed.

Should the use of human subjects described in this protocol continue beyond October 4, 2004, it would be necessary to request an extension 30 days before the expiration date. Should there be any change(s) to the protocol, it will be necessary to request such change in writing through the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects.

If you have questions or require any assistance, please contact the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 895-2794.
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276
Dissertation Title: Bursting the bubble from the inside: Individual and environmental barriers to upward mobility among Mexican immigrants

Dissertation Examination Committee:
Chairperson, Dr. Cheri Young, Ph.D.
Committee Member, Dr. David Corsun, Ph.D.
Committee Member, Dr. Bo Bernhard, Ph.D.
Graduate College Representative, Dr. Marta Meana, Ph.D.